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Geo. H. Gould -

In What Life Consists

AND OTHER SERMONS

By

REV. GEORGE H. GOULD, D. D.

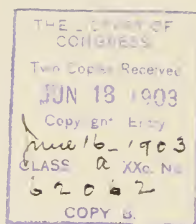
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INTRODUCTION

This volume of sermons is published that in a way they may become a memorial of Dr. Gould.

It has been thought that extracts from letters of friends and various expressions, more or less public, could best reveal the position of Dr. Gould as a preacher and as a friend. Many will recognize these sermons and will recall the tone of voice and the gestures as he delivered them. Without them much will be wanting that gave added power to the matter in hand. His style of expression had greatly changed during the last years, and many sermons we know he would have desired revised before publication.

We remember that in his earlier ministry he was somewhat criticized by his brethren for giving so much attention to the rhetoric of his sermons; but it was a "fault" for which he was not responsible. He had an ear for music—the "music of words." He aimed at repression in composition; hence he acquired a habit of always using the exact word needed. His gestures too were in keeping with the theme. He sometimes painted a scene so vividly with words and gestures, that it required little imagination to see the reality. Some will recall a vivid picture of Mt. Blanc in one of his sermons.

Soon after his birth the family moved to New Braintree. Here they sat under the preaching of Dr. Fiske. It was a daughter of Dr. Fiske, who, recognizing in Mr. Gould, as a lad, unusual intellectual ability, made it possible for him to turn his face toward college. Preparatory to college he entered Monson Academy in his fourteenth year. Previous to this he had been apprenticed to an uncle at Oakham in a carriage and harness manufactory. Later it was a source of pride to him that he knew a good harness when he saw it and could make a No. 1 whip-lash.

Mr. Gould left home with the traditionary bundle swung over his shoulders, walking the whole distance from home to Monson except for a chance "lift" now and then. Those were the days when churches took the initiative in the education of young men, when

mothers and sisters and sewing societies combined to contribute all in their power to their respectable appearance. How many students from the back country towns did penance throughout the college course in coats and trousers that, in the consciousness of the wearer, made feet and hands painfully conspicuous! These "best clothes" were held sacred, and lasted till the man had outgrown the boy as well as the clothes.

In some respects Dr. Gould's life was to him a disappointment. Conscious of intellectual powers which had been restrained and imprisoned by inadequate health, he one day, not many months before his death, expressed dissatisfaction and regret. "For one of my intellectual furnishings I should at least have written a book. There is so little to *show* for it all." But this looking at himself as the world measures people, was but for a moment. His lament was needless, for on thousands of human hearts were recorded life-giving words of the gospel he so faithfully preached.

There was no "caste" under his preaching. Rich and poor met together to praise and to pray. The prayer-meetings, the pulse of the church, were pervaded with a spirit of love that harmonized all hearts. Much as might be said of Dr. Gould intellectually, his heart was greater than his brain.

He had a keen sense of humor which often did him good service. Many a salient truth was sent home, pointed with some bright joke. This keen sense of humor made him the genial companion and the welcome guest, and during his last years he was much sought for as a happy after-dinner speaker.

In closing this sketch we desire to do honor to the memory of his early instructor at Monson Academy, Dr. Hammond, to whom Dr. Gould often referred as the inspirer of all the ambitions of his life; and who was seemingly the embodiment of all goodness and nobleness. Such examples lift the calling of a teacher to a level with the highest. No doubt Dr. Hammond was greatly inspired by the "Life of Thomas Arnold," a book he greatly admired, and was at length enabled to abandon his plan of entering the ministry for the position of instructor, realizing *his* "Rugby" at Monson. In considering such a character as the instructor of youth we feel that "learning and scholarship are important elements in civilized life, but manhood and womanhood are vastly more important."

E. M. G. S.

IN WHAT LIFE CONSISTS

"For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."—Luke 12: 15.

IN WHAT LIFE CONSISTS

In common language the word "life" is used with varying significations. In its primary or lowest use, it signifies mere animal existence—the simple principle of vitality which man shares in common with the brute creation. This is the life of the "five senses"—the life which heaves in the breath, throbs in the heart, flows in the blood and manifests itself through the several organs of the body, deriving its nutriment chiefly through appetite, eating, drinking, sleeping and mere sensational delights being the highest forms of happiness it can know. This is the type of existence just above the vegetable, the baldest and most literal definition of the principle of sentient being with which God has endowed his animal creation. This is what the scientist and the physiologist mean when they talk about "life."

But both in common language and in the Scriptures, it is now to be said, this word "life" is far oftener used in a figurative than in a literal sense, namely, to denote the sum or essence of that which makes life chiefly desirable and attractive. It is thus a synonym for the word "happiness," and these two words "life" and "happiness,"

in fact, can be used interchangeably in very many passages of Scripture. Thus the Psalmist says, "Thou wilt show me the path of life," or happiness. "With thee is the fountain of life." So Solomon says of heavenly wisdom, "It shall be *life* unto thy soul," "whoso findeth me findeth life," or happiness, and universally throughout the New Testament, the sum of all present and future felicity is expressed by the phrase "eternal life," and the sum of all future misery by the phrase "eternal death." Thus to men's minds generally, both in its religious and secular use, the word conveys the general idea I have stated—namely, the highest pleasure or happiness or satisfaction to be derived from the divine gift of existence.

But now, while thus far there probably would be no dissent from the general definition I have given, at this point we shall find that, practically, a wide divergence of view obtains among men as to what "life," or happiness, really is. These divergent views we may perhaps limit to four.

First, there is a large class of persons in our day, as in past times, who evidently consider "life," or the sum of enjoyment in this world, to consist mainly in the free and unrestrained gratification of their sense nature, the life of appetite, passion, conviviality and self-indulgence, the life of Epicureanism, whose cardinal maxim, according to

Paul, is, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." This is emphatically the life which the Scriptures denominate the life of the "flesh," whose first aim is to forget both the past and the future in a hilarious enjoyment of the present. Its favorite motto is, "Throw care to the winds." On this plane of living conscience is ever an intruder. The voice of duty is only harsh and discordant in the halls of sensual revelry or in the clubrooms of bacchanalian festivity. Every uprising instinct of accountability, of religious foreboding, must here be bound over to keep the peace. No troublesome themes of heaven and hell and judgment to come must be allowed to invade these giddy precincts. The devotees of this type of life can live only in the whirls of unreflecting gaiety. Pleasure is the goddess at whose shrine every offering is brought. Alas, my friends, there are thousands upon thousands of young men and young women to-day, in whose minds and imaginations life, God-given life, means just this and nothing more!

But, next, there is what we may call the life of deliberate or methodized self-seeking, or personal ambition. Cool, calculating is this form of life, as distinguished from the sensual or Epicurean. It is given to no fevers of excitement; indeed, it often resolutely stifles passion and appetite and love of pleasure for the sake of remoter, yet

purely selfish good in the future. This life manifests itself under the various forms of avarice, pride, fashion, display, love of power. It is more reflective than the former, inasmuch as it carefully adapts means to ends, gathers wisdom from past experience and, in a degree, forecasts the future. But the future to which it looks is ever bounded by the horizon of time. All its maxims are worldly—the heaping up of riches, the attainment of earthly rank, the glory and the fame which come from men and not from God.

A third type of life I may designate as the life of the ideal faculties, or the intellectual tastes and aspirations; in other words “intellectual life.” This life possesses a degree of dignity, it must be confessed, even when disconnected from any higher life, which belongs to neither of the others, and which cannot fail, to some extent, to command our involuntary admiration. This is the life developed through philosophy, poetry; through all the products of the imagination. It is the life of art, of taste, of esthetic emotion, of intellectual dominion. There is in it that which kindles irresistibly the emulation of all finely organized minds. It appeals powerfully to our sentiment of hero-worship. Its proudest illustrations in the past have been the Platos, the Aristotles, the Zenos, the Bacons of the world. It was manifested in Athenian culture and Spartan jurisprudence. It has been developed in the classics of every age: Homer,

Virgil, Tennyson, Bryant. It has breathed in painting, towered in architecture, glistened in marble. It enchants the world through music, through the periods of oratory and the pages of fiction; in short, the life of which I now speak is the development of the intellect, imagination and ideal faculties of a man up to the highest point to which they can go without the aid of the moral and religious nature.

The fourth and last type, then, which remains to be mentioned is the Scriptural or the divine type, supernaturally begotten in the soul of men by the Spirit of God; that inner experience, that exalted type of being of which Christ discoursed in my text to-day and through his Gospels; distinguished from all the others, not by excluding the right elements of any of them, but by subjugating all the powers and attributes of our undying manhood to the reign of the moral faculty and the religious aspirations of the soul. This divine life differs widest from all the others by carrying in itself the germ of immortality, by deriving its sustenance continually from supermundane sources and by apprehending with some degree of clearness the realities, values and motive powers of an eternal hereafter. This Scriptural or Christian form of life, let me say at the outset, seeks no violent separation of itself from any of the legitimate elements of happiness contained in the lower forms.

All the right functions of the body, all the pleasures of a healthy animal vitality, all the pure delights of social fellowship, all the normal joys of intellect and of esthetic culture when obedient and instrumental to higher Christian aims, have no war with the divine life of God in the soul. As a majestic forest-tree, though bathing its head in the clouds and drinking in through all its Briarean arms the dew and sunshine of heaven; though wrestling with storms and playing with zephyrs and courting the music of birds, yet scorns not the earth whence it sprung but penetrates it still with a thousand roots, so the Christian, renewed by the Spirit of God and aspiring to heavenly companionships, does not forget that in becoming a Christian he has not ceased to be a man, but while in time and in the flesh has human relations to bear and human duties to perform.

But now proceeding to a more positive unfolding and characterization of this higher and Christian type of life in the soul of man, I am led to remark, in the first place, that its most distinctive and marvelous feature, as I regard it, a feature which differentiates it as widely as the poles are asunder from all other forms of human life, is this:—*its power of self-expansion*, or indefinite enlargement of the volume of its being. Christ said of his followers, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might

have it more abundantly." Our animal and sense life is narrow and constricted. All its forces are centripetal. All its functions play inward and not outward, concentrating the supreme energies of the never-dying spirit upon puny, paltry and finite self. But when God's supernatural grace takes possession of a human heart at conversion, as I understand, it reverses all these native tendencies. The movement of the life thenceforward becomes centrifugal and no longer centripetal. An absolutely new form of existence is originated in the human breast by the regenerating Spirit of God, a life of unselfish and benevolent sympathy with the whole moral dominions of God. This I take to be the first sign and seal of that experience which the Scriptures call the new birth. Thus, while an unrenewed human heart, by the law of its wretched nature, if we leave out of view the instinctive affections, works ever toward solitariness, isolation and selfishness, the renewed soul works toward sympathetic and ever-widening fellowship with the whole sentient empire of the Creator. And is not this, my friends, manifestly that more abundant life of which our Saviour spoke? Love, divine and unselfish love, becomes from the hour of true conversion the mystic, almost magic bond, that multiplies existence a thousandfold and links the soul in fraternal intercourse with all the offspring of an almighty Parent. Thus every Christian life,

every truly Christian life, voluntarily intertwines itself with every other human life. It roots its own existence in the common soil of humanity. It counts the race its brothers, blood-bought together by the same infinite, dying Redeemer. It therefore weeps with those that weep and rejoices with those that rejoice. It sends the waves of its regenerated affection to the remotest heathen shore, and as joy fills heaven when sinners repent, so do Christian hearts below, truly alive to Christ, pulsate to new tides of holy rapture when Satan-thralled souls, in any clime, are redeemed unto God. How was this heart-expanding and humanity-embracing power of religion illustrated in Paul, in Whitefield and Henry Martyn, Adoniram Judson and all in our world whose souls have been inflamed at the altar of heavenly benevolence! And, my brethren, only will your life and mine rise from sensual littleness to the true grandeur of existence, when we catch the spirit of such men, and, baptized with the same baptism from above, we, too, become willing, nay, joyful, to lose self in a sacrificial and Christly sympathy with every brother man beneath the over-arching sky. Taught by the Scriptures, I hold this to be the first mark and the last of every Spirit-born human heart. "I am come," said Christ, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

But this Christ-given and Spirit-born life in the human soul differs again from all others, not only by this wonderful enlargement of its earthly sympathies, but by instituting forthwith an unseen yet real communion between self and all holy and supernal intelligences. "Our conversation," said Paul, "is in heaven;" not *will be* but *is*. Already, if God's true children, we are citizens and participants in the upper felicity of that world of light. It was a favorite idea with the old philosophers that every man had a dual nature; that two opposite principles or divinities ruled his soul, the one earthly and the other divine; and that these two principles or demons were continually struggling for the mastery. But this glimmering heathen thought is a profound and central revelation, as it seems to me, of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without God's implanted grace, man is earthy, earth-looking, earth-absorbed and earth-tending forever. God, indeed, has made him with heavenly capacities, but unquickened from above; these all remain latent and powerless, while the earthly demon reigns rampant and supreme through all the vitalities of the soul. Every man by nature, we might almost say, Janus-like, is born with two faces, double senses, looking simultaneously earthward and heavenward. But while the earthly senses are all breathing and acute, the upward face is paralytic, blind and insensate until touched by the mi-

raculous power of the soul's Redeemer. By nature every man's whole upward hemisphere of moral consciousness is filled only with midnight darkness.

Winding about under the city of Rome just beneath the feet of living men, are far-extending, subterranean caverns or excavations, called catacombs. In times of ancient imperial persecution, men and women fled to these dismal abodes for refuge. Here they lived, ate, drank, slept. Here chapels were formed and decorated in which they worshiped God. Here they interred their dead. Here children were born, engaged in childish sports, grew almost to manhood and womanhood with no knowledge of the sweet heavens that hung like a curtain of beauty over the world above them. But when at length an interval of peace came, when the imperial monster was hurled from his bloody throne by revolution or an assassin's dagger, these poor, hunted ones came up from their living graves. As they trod again the green-carpeted earth; as every opening sense bathed itself in the unaccustomed air; as the perfume of flowers filled their nostrils, as they walked through templed forests while brooks murmured and bright-plumed birds filled the groves with echoing music; and at nightfall when the gorgeous clouds faded and the bright stars and the silver moon rode forth to lift the spirit upward and to fill that balmy Italian air with all unearthly

glory, contrasted with the subterranean world they had left, how must every nerve and sense and pore of these liberated ones have been filled with the ecstasy of a new life! But, my friends, human beings, dungeoned for a lifetime in sunless catacombs, are not so shut out from all true existence as they who, wearing God's image, walk ever insphered in the "life of the flesh," with no upward-piercing vision, hearing no voices from the skies, upon whose minds the light of divine things has never flashed, who walk beneath the very vault of heaven, blind and deaf and dead to celestial wonders as the very brutes at their side.

I will add but one more characteristic of the higher life of God in the soul of man. It is immortal. *It is deathless.* "Because I live, ye shall live also." "I am the resurrection, and the life," said Christ to Martha. The life of our nostrils will soon exhale. The life of sense, of earthly attachment, the life which incarnates itself in covetousness, pride, ambition, in the most dazzling dreams of earthly power, in mere intellectual ascendancy, are all bounded by the horizon of time and never carry their treasures through the portals of the grave.

Alexander the Great, so-called, world-conqueror, and weeping that his dominions could extend no farther, when at last, heart-sick, he lay upon his dying couch, tradition tells us, gave this final command to his friends: that when

at length they should wrap him in his winding-sheet and carry him forth to his gorgeous burial, they should leave his hands visible, that all the world might see that Alexander's hands were empty at the last! But, my friends, he who has God's life within, becomes kingly and crowned only when the grave has shut down on all his mortal triumphs. Then only can the undying human spirit rise to the full fruition and grandeur of that experience which the Scriptures call "life." "For a man's life," said our Saviour, "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

And tell me, is not this to-day the one unchallenged testimony of history? Was a man ever yet satisfied with what he had accumulated? What was Solomon's verdict, whose wealth was so unparalleled that Sheba's queen fainted when she looked upon the splendor of his treasures and the magnificence of his retinue? But over it all the royal preacher simply wrote, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

Was human heart ever satisfied with worldly pleasure? The whole recorded past, to-day, on this point is but one long wail of disappointment. Was a soul's deathless hunger ever fed with the plaudits of earthly fame? I might now turn this room into a court of testimony and summon witnesses before you till the sun should set. Brilliant Thomas Campbell, author of "The Pleasures of Hope,"

but who, alas, was a stranger to the only hope which enters into that within the veil, in his old age wrote, "I am alone in the world, *my hopes are dead*; and as for fame, it is a bubble that soon must burst." William Pitt, foremost of England's statesmen, most consummate orator of his time, in the meridian of his powers, loaded with public honors, Wilberforce tells us, "died of a broken heart." Sheridan, the gifted, who at one point of his career stood on a pinnacle of unmatched popular glory, in his last days, drink-cursed, poverty-stricken, friend-forsaken, penned these sad words: "I am absolutely undone, and broken-hearted." Hear poor Scott of Scotland, fame-idolized child, in his old age driven forth from Abbotsford, sing his closing dirge of life: "I think my heart will break. Some new object of complaint comes every moment. Sickesses thicker and thicker, friends fewer and fewer."

But why do I attempt thus feebly to reinforce my Saviour's words to-day. "A man's life," said he, "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." No, my friends, "things" never yet made life, since the world stood. "Things" never yet made happiness, though you should pile them up around a man, high as the crags to which the eagles soar. Indeed, if he has no life within him, God-begotten and heaven-tending, "things" about him will only crush and smother all true life out of him, as Midas was starved by superabundant gold.

When Cornelius Vanderbilt lay upon his dying bed, he asked his attendants, we are told, to sing for him. They sang the familiar revival hymn, "Come, ye sinners poor and needy." Said the dying man, "Please sing that again for me. *I am poor and needy!*" Yes, he, acknowledged money-king of New York, whose property was reckoned at a hundred and twenty millions, in that hour confessed himself "poor and needy." And I say to you, that any man, whoever he be, though his treasures should "outshine the wealth of Ormus and of Ind," is without God as miserable a pauper to-day as yonder sun looks down upon.

"What shall it profit a man," asked Christ, "if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" And when a man has lost himself, what is left? But a true heart, love-illuminated and Christ-expanded, can carry the universe within it, as a drop of water can mirror all the stars.

But all the down-flashing glory of God's heavens cannot change a clod into a man, meanness into nobleness, selfishness into happiness. God's true kingdom is within us. "Thrust a good man into hell," says one, "and he would evolve a heaven out of himself." Put a wicked man into paradise and you have put him into the hottest torment of which he is capable. But this present joy, this inner life of God's people, exalted as it is, is only a fore-taste of what is to come. Yes, there is a life beyond life,

my brethren, to be consummated only when death is swallowed up in victory.

"Is that a death-bed where a Christian lies?
Yes, but not *his*—'t is Death himself there dies."

And indeed, not until God's child *dies*, as men call it, does he really begin to live. As those gates resplendent have swung open from time to time, to welcome some ascending saint, how have we, through our tears, it may be, caught a glimpse of that life beyond! "Glory! glory! glory!" said Janeway with his last breath. "I am going to bathe in an ocean of purity, benevolence and happiness to all eternity," said departing Payson. "To all eternity!" What does that mean? My friends,

"When I've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
I've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when I first begun!"

"Thou wilt show me the path of life," said the psalmist king: "in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." On that mount of vision David died.

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life," says the Revelator of Patmos, "clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," and that river from beneath yonder throne, believe it, brethren, shall

never waste its volume, emblematic of that eternal joy wherewith God shall lave the souls of his redeemed. And will we not all aspire to-day to that life which is beyond life and which only He can give who by his own death has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

GIVING AND RECEIVING

“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” — Acts 20: 35.

GIVING AND RECEIVING

This is a closing injunction of Paul, you will remember, to the Ephesian elders in that notable interview at Miletus. When and where Christ uttered the words now quoted does not appear in the sacred history. This, then, not unlikely, was one of those sayings of the Master, unreported by the four evangelists, to which John refers at the close of his Gospel. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." We may assume, then, that this was one of those revered traditional utterances of our Lord for a long time current on the lips of his disciples. But were it impossible to trace this language to any specific declaration of Christ, obviously it was the one great transactional doctrine and teaching of his incarnate life. "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

There is a true and universally recognized blessedness or happiness in receiving. We are so made that we experience happiness as recipient beings. We are furnished with appetites which demand constant supply. When hungry we crave food, when thirsty we crave drink, and there is a

lawful and perfectly innocent pleasure attached by the Creator himself to every such normal self-gratification. There is also a legitimate and functional pleasure connected with the right use of all our bodily organs and senses. The eye rejoices in light and in receiving upon its preadapted retina the pictured impression of the outer world. The ear is delighted by unrolling waves of musical sound. The palate is gratified by gustatory flavors and the nostrils by wafted perfumes of flowers. Thus our entire physical being is strung with organic sensibilities through which we receive constantly a certain kind and amount of happiness or blessedness.

And so as we ascend the scale from the material to the immaterial we find the same thing holding true. Our intellect derives a joy from the contemplation of truth; our imagination in feasting upon forms of ideal beauty. Our emotions and sensibilities, when in a healthy condition, are all inlets of a kind of passive ecstasy, as the chords of a well-strung instrument thrill melodiously under the fingers of a master. So, in still higher degree, our affectional and moral nature is made happy by receiving love, kindness, sympathy, charity and generosity from others. Thus, in a word, through the whole range of our sentient and spiritual being we are capable of happiness or blessedness through receiving.

But now Christ affirms a happiness beyond this, the happiness of giving. Let us, then, proceed to inquire if there be any basis, in the nature of things, on which to rest this strong declaration of Christ, reaffirmed by the apostle. And first, I think, it will not be questioned by any, that ordinarily, in men's estimation, giving ranks higher than receiving in point of personal dignity and essential nobleness. Man is king over God's earthly creation, chiefly because he alone is endowed with the faculty of will. Will-power crowns man at once supreme over all his mundane fellow creatures, allies him with his uncreated Maker and is the most godlike faculty he possesses. By virtue of this power of will, man in his sphere and measure is himself a creator, that is, able to generate force from himself as a center, and thus set in motion, out of the resources of his personality, trains of achievement and influence that may be as wide-reaching as the boundaries of our globe. Thus, by reason of this exalted power of self-energizing, man is fitted to be not only a receiver but like his Maker preeminently a giver. Hence every true man takes an infinitely higher delight in the use of his active powers than in the use of his mere passive powers. There is no such enjoyment to a real man in health, as activity through the whole range of his being. A brute has nothing of this power of personality. A brute can start no trains of in-

fluence; this is man's prerogative. And even when there is no specific intention of good will to others, yet no man can employ his best powers and faculties and not be a benefactor. For example, Raphael and Angelo and Phidias, creators in the mere realm of beauty, have laid the world under imperishable obligations to their genius. Plato and Aristotle, creators in the kingdom of thought, will never cease to be held as kingly benefactors of our race. And so the great poets and orators and writers of the world will never cease to rule from their "sculptured urns" the admiring hearts of mankind. Thus, first of all, I argue from the most obvious structure of our being that God has designed that man's noblest function in this world shall be that of a giver and not of a mere receiver.

But looking still further at our original nature as the handiwork of God, we find that giving as well as receiving is ordained of heaven as a condition of health in body, mind and spirit. The nutriment we take into our bodies must go from us again in muscle-force and nerve-force and brain-force, or we sink inevitably into disuse and asphyxia. God has beautifully symbolized this necessity of our nature, as I think, in the very structure of our nervous system. Physiology teaches us that there are two sets of nerves traversing the human frame, side by side; the one set called nerves of sensation, the other nerves of motion.

The one nerve line serves as an incoming track for all feelings, signals and impressions received by the brain from the outer world; the other nerve track is designed evidently for all the outgoing cargoes of thought and feeling and executive force by which we act on the world around us. If either of these nerve lines is destroyed we become at once useless and helpless paralytics. So with the intellect. If it only receives and does not itself act, energize and become a thought producer, it has no growth, but sinks into imbecility. So with our emotions and sensibilities. If passively played upon, as in the excessive reading of highly-wrought works of fiction, where no opportunity is given for corresponding deeds of charity and self-sacrifice to follow excited feelings of compassion and love and pity, the feelings at length become exhausted and refuse to act, even in sight of real suffering and distress. Every intemperate reader of novels is in danger of becoming, in time, a kind of sentimental monstrosity, the healthy balance of the moral nature being destroyed,—simply because this God-ordained equilibrium between feeling and conduct has been trifled with. Thus all through our being we find this double track, laid by our Creator, indicating that we are not only to receive but to give forth in order to preserve health. The Dead Sea is dead because it has inlets and no outlets. Only a running stream can be kept pure

and fresh and living. So a human being who only receives and does not give forth is dead, while he has a name to live.

But, I remark again, it is more blessed to give than to receive because the blessedness of mere receiving has a very narrow orbit and ordinarily reaches a speedy termination; while the blessedness of giving is well-nigh illimitable and inexhaustible in its extent. This will be readily seen if we glance at almost any of our passive powers and capabilities. The epicure has but one stomach to fill, one palate to gratify, though he have a hundred barns and storehouses groaning with plenty and though his table be laden with the delicacies of every clime. The sensualist has but one quickly wasting body to lay on the fiery altar of lust. The proudest millionaire can inhabit but one dwelling at a time, or wear upon his back but one man's complement of apparel. No royal debauchee ever succeeded in permanently enlarging the domain of mere animal enjoyment. God has put inexorable limits to all human capacity in that direction. No man by the aid of worldly riches and power ever bribed sickness or decrepitude or advancing age to exempt him from the common lot of mortals. No man, however grasping and overreaching in his lifetime, when death had seized him, has ever been able to occupy more than his lawful share of mother

earth. And so mere wealth and selfish accumulation were never able to purchase or secure any of the most priceless and glorious blessings of life. Money never yet purchased a love of the beautiful or the true or the good. Money never yet bought culture, or contentment of mind, or greatness of soul, or domestic felicity, or purity of character, or generosity or manhood, or any of those shining qualities that adorn and characterize God's true nobility on earth. Thus we see at a glance that a spirit of inveterate self-seeking, the being a mere receiver and absorber of God's bounties, has at the best only a most limited and ignoble range in which to gain happiness.

But look, on the other hand, at a giver or dispenser, in God's name, of heavenly bounties received. In the first place, every such giver is endued with a power almost miraculous to multiply his own enjoyment. If he has wealth and worldly abundance, instead of confining himself like an epicure to the delights of one palate, he can just as well enjoy the delights of scores or hundreds of palates, and, in a way, be followed by no dyspepsia or gout or apoplexy or languors or surfeiting. Instead of filling one household with sunshine, he can fill a hundred. Instead of causing one heart to sing for joy, he can, with heaven's help, fill his ears with a whole orchestra of grateful soul-music all around him. And this kind of happiness,

notice, does not instantly pall on the taste, like the epicure's, but the more this appetite for giving is indulged the keener and sweeter the heavenly relish grows, and the larger are the returns constantly brought back into the liberal soul. A benevolent man, moreover, is able to multiply his own happiness through organized methods of beneficence, such as institutions and corporations of charity. These overflowing fountains of light and blessedness, these monuments of Christlike good will to others, which he perhaps has helped erect, will continue to perform their heavenly offices toward the needy, the orphaned, the ignorant, the sorrowing and the friendless, when he is busy with other duties, while he is sleeping at night and when, at last, he is resting in his grave. And what immortal benefactors of their kind have been such large-souled and imperial givers of their wealth as Yale, Cooper, Williston, Peabody, Harvard and Brown—men who have increased and multiplied their own personal influence and contemporary fame and power for good ten thousandfold, through centuries of time, and not only over one continent but round the globe!

Look then, my friends, for one moment at such an exalted and multiplied form of personal happiness and influence, and contrast it with the beggarly and skin-bound happiness of a mere selfish absorber of God's bounties.

Contemplate this matter of personal happiness for one moment under another aspect. God has made us social beings, and next to the smile of his Fatherly face upon us, our highest happiness comes to us through our social affections and susceptibilities. The joys and delights of friendship and social communion, next to God's own favor, are the purest and holiest fountains of enjoyment known to the human breast. But a mere self-seeker, a mere tireless money-getter and hoarder, is doing all in his power to dry up every one of these fountains of blessedness which God has originally opened in his soul. By his groveling and greedy spirit he becomes more and more a recluse and a social outlaw, an Ishmaelite among men. He ceases to have friends because friends are expensive. He knows nothing of warm, outgushing, holy human affection, for his own sordid breast has become incapable of exciting or returning it. In his business and in his household he is surrounded with hirelings and sycophants who hate and despise him, under the mask of punctilious obedience and cringing respect. He loses at last all power of sweet and manly emotion. No sunshine of sympathy ever flits into his stony eye or lights up his pitiless face under the tale of human want. No widow's prayers ever call down grateful benedictions on his head. No orphans' home or desolate household grows brighter at his approaching

footstep. No loving, sporting child ever looks up into that dehumanized countenance, and does not turn away with a shudder. God's own blasting and withering judgments have already scarred that man in every lineament and through every power of his soul. The best part of him has gone to the grave long before his tottering body. A few expectant relatives linger about him to the end, drape themselves in mocking grief at his funeral, endeavor to drop a few decorous tears on his coffin and then hurry home from the obsequies with itching fingers to open his will and give a hasty ventilation to his musty, long-hoarded, man-cursed and God-cursed property. My friends, I ask you, is there another such picture of absolute loneliness, of awful soul-desertion this side of hell, as the death-bed of a miser?

I remark yet further, giving is more blessed than receiving because only by giving can we rise to true fellowship with God and into a likeness to Christ and into sympathy with all holy beings above. God is supremely blessed in the universe because he is the supreme Giver in the universe. Only as we become givers is it possible for us in any degree to share divine felicity. And only as we become givers can we enter into any true discipleship to Him who *gave himself* for others. "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to

give his life a ransom for many." That jubilant birth-song of the heralding angels on the morning of the Nativity, you remember, was simply, "good tidings of great joy to all people." Of those angels in light, we further read that they are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." And everywhere in God's Word is it not clearly intimated that the supremest joy of that beatified throng is evermore loving ministry to the bliss and happiness of others? If, then, to-day, my brethren, we have no habit or spirit of giving, as I study the Scriptures, we lack the first moral fitness to enter heaven. We have not heart power to fellowship, either now or hereafter, its holy company.

And once more I argue before you at this time the blessedness of giving, because only what we give in Christ's name and for Christ's sake is stored for our future ownership in heaven's indestructible exchequer and in God's everlasting remembrance. When death comes, what we have kept we lose, what we have given away we save. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren," will be our enthroned Saviour's greeting to each of us, "ye have done it unto me." If, then, in time and in probation we have made generous investments

yonder and diligently laid up treasures there, throughout unwasting eternal years shall be a ceaseless income and inflow of seraphic happiness into the bosoms of our glorified and deathless spirits. But if we have made gold our god, our cankered and unconsecrated wealth will be a damning witness against us in that day. The rust of it shall eat our flesh as it were fire and the Master's words, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it *not* to me," will be our condemnation.

And now, my friends, let me conclude with two remarks. First, if giving be indeed thus honored and blessed by the ordination of heaven I venture to exhort those to whose hands God has given abundantly to know something of this divine blessedness while yet among the living. Wait not to make death your attorney to dole out with his bony fingers your benefactions after you are gone. Stretch forth your own warm and living palm, with God's gracious bounty in it, to Christ's needy ones around you and know something of the Christly joy that shall thrill back again to the loving soul. Administrate upon your own estate, execute your own bequests for Christ while it is possible for you to take the joy of it here and the reward of it hereafter.

Listen to the words of another on this devil's temptation to posthumous benevolence. "There is no charity,"

said the late Dr. Guthrie of Scotland, "in leaving money which we could now spare to do good with when we are dead. There is no self-denial, no cross-bearing in that. If we could only carry our money with us to another world, there might be some virtue in leaving it behind. But since we cannot and must leave the world as naked as we entered it, there is none. In fact, we are giving away what is not ours, what ceases to be ours the moment of our decease, and what our right to expires with life. . . The fortunes, then, that rear splendid and falsely called charities after death, prove nothing in favor of the donors, but rather the reverse. They only show how hard and cold and grasping and avaricious these men were that only death could compel the miser to relax his iron grip of the widows' and orphans' bread."

Let us not cheat ourselves, my friends, with the thought that we can be benevolent in the coffin if we have never been benevolent before. It we have never shown any Christian generosity, any spirit of self-sacrifice as living men we certainly never will as dead men. Heed, then, I beseech you, those solemn words of inspiration, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Finally, if there be indeed a heavenly blessedness in

giving, then to know that blessedness we must not give in the spirit of grudging. "God loveth a cheerful giver," wrote Paul to the Corinthians; and again, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." But nowhere, my friends, do I read in this Bible that the sacrifices of an unwilling and grudging spirit are ever accepted by the great Heart Searcher above. True Christian giving, then, is always heart giving, loving, cheerful, grateful giving for His sake who gave all for us. "Freely ye have received, freely give," was the Saviour's tender injunction to his disciples.

I have happened to know men possessing large wealth, nominally Christian, I grieve to say, whose well-nigh settled habit, it seemed, was to greet nearly every applicant for Christian charity with a morose and repellent discourtesy which they would never display toward any man whose business patronage they valued to the extent of a dollar. Honored and noble servants of the Lord Jesus, too, were some of these applicants. Now I say such giving as that is an abomination in the sight of the Lord and a disgrace to the Christianity it professes to exemplify. If we, then, cannot rise to the blessedness of Christian giving, let us at least not descend to the violation of the first principles of civility. "Freely ye have received, freely

give" are the words that ring evermore in our ears from the crucified Lord. Do any of us murmur that heaven's marvelous mercies are so constant and so unremitting, that day by day, once and again, the abundant table of his loving providence is spread before us? Why, then, complain of the oft return of that higher and truer blessing, the luxury of giving? Why will we persist in regarding it simply an intrusion, an annoyance, a thorn in the side? Why complain that the radiant Master himself, in disguise, so often knocks at our doors in the persons of his lowly and suffering? Why complain that so often we are called to feast upon the heavenly manna of *giving*, from love to Him who loved us unto death? My brethren, I give thanks to God that to so many of you this royal privilege is no longer a cross; that so many of you now stand on the shining summit of a personal experience of the Christly blessedness of giving and have proved in your own souls the truth of your Saviour's words, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosoms." Oh, that we all might know more and more of this divine blessedness of giving; that more and more we may become so at one with Christ and so fellowship his unspeakable sacrifice that our highest privilege shall be to bring ourselves, our time, our talents, our business, our

children, our possessions and lay everything a grateful gift at his sacred feet!

Let me close by adopting as my own the touching words of Paul in this farewell interview with those weeping brethren of Ephesus, even as they hung upon his neck in the bitterness of a final parting: "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." And when the Church has truly learned this great lesson of gospel stewardships; when God's own infinite gift of his Son to die for a lost world has been reinforced by the consecrated giving of his people, how soon will the glad tidings of salvation girdle the earth; how soon will great voices be heard in heaven saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever!"

ENJOYING LIFE

“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” — Ecclesiastes 11: 9.

ENJOYING LIFE

These words of Solomon have been differently interpreted by commentators. Some have taken the whole first part of this verse to be ironical, a kind of sacred banter or mockery, a sarcastic hortation to the young freely to indulge in worldly and sensuous pleasure, but with an abrupt change from sarcasm to seriousness in the conclusion, where the admonition is added, that for all these things God will bring them into judgment.

Now, I must dissent from the opinion that this language is sarcastic or ironical. First: because such an interpretation, to my mind, would throw it violently out of harmony with this whole book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon, if I rightly read him, nowhere intimates in this treatise that worldly good, that the common providential blessings of life are not to be esteemed, rationally enjoyed and received with devout thanksgiving; only that they are to be enjoyed ever in subordination to higher interests and to the holy will of the infinite and gracious Giver. I dissent yet further from the interpretation of irony, because it would throw this passage into discord with the great aggregate of inspired teaching contained in the Bible. The Bible, my

friends, is not a morbid book. You can find morbidness in plenty in human writings, in religious memoirs and in devotional diaries, but never in the Word of God. The Bible is never misanthropic, is never ascetic, is never hypochondriacal. In other words, it never belittles what God himself has taken pains to magnify. The infinite Maker of all things has set his own seal of honor upon human life, upon the outfit of this world and upon every gift of his earthly providence. He clearly intended existence to be a blessing and not a bane to every creature he has made. When he had finished his six days' work at the beginning, you remember, he unqualifiedly pronounced it "good." To all the denizens of the sea, to all roaming tribes of the forest, to all the countless populations that swarm in the illimitable air, to the minutest creature of his hand, God gave life to be a blessing, and ordained that during its appointed round it should bask evermore in the sunshine of his favor. But over all he has placed man as king,—king in nobleness and king in happiness. "Only man's own ineffable perversity can defeat the Maker's design and change life from an unspeakable boon into an unfathomable curse."

Still further, I gather from all the intimations of Providence and the teachings of the Bible, that God designs especially that the period of youth shall be one of su-

perlative cheer and joyousness and happiness. Life is then fresh. Health is bounding. Every power is at its best. The appetites are keen and natural and unsated. The imagination is all aglow with pictures of beauty. The sensibilities are all quick, delicate, electric, emitting music like a harp at every touch. The heart is a fountain of guileless affection, outpouring its costliest treasures at the feet of every applicant who brings in his hand the golden flagon of love. The vile and parasitic growths of avarice, jealousy, envy, ambition, have not yet coiled their dark roots around the soul, dwarfing the manhood, searing the conscience and shutting out the light of heaven from the dawning intelligence. The mind is plastic, the emotions tender, the reason truthful, the heart loving and trustful. O childhood and youth, how beautiful to contemplate!

And now, my friends, in my judgment it is no part of religion to darken this picture. God never sent religion into this world to curdle its joys or to throw one added ray of gloom across a single pathway. On the contrary, he sent religion into this world to banish gloom, to disarm fear, to make both the present and the future of our race inexpressibly brighter. Rightly understood, then, religion is given to make this world sunnier, to widen immeasurably the horizon of our present enjoyment, and to perpetuate that enjoyment against all possible future evils. Rightly understood,

religion heightens the value of every gift of God. It transfigures all nature with a new glory. It heightens the colors and deepens the lines of beauty penciled upon every flower and grass-blade springing at our feet. It makes the sunshine more grateful. It fills the night with a more dazzling splendor. It gives to the humblest life, experience, a broader and grander meaning. The voice of religion to every child of God to-day is: "Rejoice in the priceless boon of existence." To every youth as he stands upon its threshold, like an Apollo of manly grace and strength, its mandate is; "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth." But now, religion no more than reason, I call you to notice, encourages or sanctions irresponsible pleasure. A man can no more find happiness in this world in the path of unbridled license than a planet, a courser in yonder sky, can dash along its radiant orbit safely without the curb of gravitation thrown athwart its flaming neck; no more than a lad's kite can mount upward to the very battlements of heaven without the check and ballast of the string which he holds in his hand. In short, we can move toward happiness in this world in no direction without confronting constantly the limitations and injunctions of law.

And first, the material laws of our own bodies. You are a botanist, or mineralogist, I will suppose, and to-mor-

row you take a country ramble for minerals or to add to the contents of your herbarium. You pass in your search from crag to crag and along the dizzy edge of overhanging precipices, obeying simply your own sweet will, but utterly regardless of the law of gravity. How long, I ask, could your physical soundness be guaranteed? Or, bent simply on sense gratification, you diet upon arsenic, because it has a flavor of sweetness on the tongue; or, with unscreened vision you gaze into the cloudless face of the noonday sun because Solomon has happened to write: "A pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." How long could you thus heedlessly transgress fundamental, natural laws around you and not put an end to your bodily enjoyment? Or, how long could you run counter to the social laws established around you and not suffer? Suppose you undertook any day of the week to traverse a crowded thoroughfare from end to end, walking simply in the way of your own heart and in the sight of your own eyes, but utterly oblivious of the rights or convenience of others. How long before, in the clutch of a policeman, or within the walls of a station-house, you would have abundant leisure to ponder the social problems that underlie human intercourse? Or, should a ship's captain enter a crowded harbor and navigate his vessel in sheer defiance of all maritime law, how long would any insurance company risk a policy on his lawless craft?

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Thus at every single step of life, is it not obvious that we insure our own happiness, physical and social, simply by putting ourselves under bonds to respect the happiness of others and to obey that code of laws upon which all human happiness is conditioned in this world? In like manner each one of us, every day of life, is putting himself of his own accord under some kind of bonds to keep peace with the future, no matter how little he is actuated by religious considerations. As spring stands related to autumn, April to September and May to October, so the different seasons in our life are vitally related to each other. What kind of a harvest could a farmer expect in the fall, who, like the sluggard, had slept and idled away all the spring-time? What kind of a manhood can an idle and dissolute youth expect when by and by he shall garner in the fruit of the seed he is now sowing?

Once more, every man practically admits this truth, that there is a kind of just accountability to be maintained between the different powers and faculties of his own nature. Reason as well as religion teaches that there should be both king and subjects, noble orders and plebeian ranks in the kingdom of the soul. We all know that reason rather than appetite should wear the crown. We all concede that conscience is a better pilot than passion, intellect a safer guide than impulse, love a better driving

power than lust behind any man's life ; and so we all readily acknowledge that, would we live worthily of ourselves, some parts of our complex nature must be subordinated to other parts.

But now, one round more remains in this ladder of accountability we are climbing to-day. The infinite Creator of the world, the God of all flesh, has immutably decreed that every human being shall reach his acme of highest happiness only through a free and loving recognition of His divine personality and His sovereign authority. God has made us for himself. He has made the human soul to sweep through a majestic orbit of faith, love and worship of which Himself is the radiant center. He has made every spirit power within us to bloom and ripen to its full capacity and its most perfect joy only by communion with Himself and by dwelling evermore in the light of His favor.

And now, my friends, consider, if one can wreck his happiness by scorning the lowest laws of his body, if he can ruin himself by ignoring social responsibilities, if he can put his whole enjoyment, present and future, in peril by contemning the voice of reason, what disaster irreparable and now inconceivable, must await that soul, ultimately essaying to live in open and incorrigible violation of the most vital law of all spirit-life in this universe—ac-

countability to the infinite Father of spirits and to the supreme, eternal Governor of the world! God, then, has made man for happiness, but for happiness, be it never forgotten, under law, under accountability. Lawless happiness, irresponsible pleasure, I now affirm, is a thing unknown to-day in the whole empire of the Almighty.

And now, in the sacred name of religion, I invite you, my young friends, to a life of happiness. I invite you to taste a feast of enjoyment such as the universe does not elsewhere contain. I sound again in your hearing the words of the wise man of old: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

I do not ask you to take any somber views of life. I have no gospel of asceticism to preach to you. Enjoyment is your birthright and mine. Life is an unspeakable blessing. Existence is a transcendent boon to him who will use it as God meant it should be used. It is a glorious thing to be a man; to have a man's powers, a man's capacities, a man's destiny! It is a glorious thing to be placed in a world like this, king and steward of its marvelous treasures! It is glorious to look out upon God's sunshine; to trace his creative signature in the primeval

rocks and his finger-prints in the flowers; to study his handiwork in the stars! It is glorious to be dowered with a man's influence, a man's brain, a man's heart, a man's power to achieve, his grandeur in suffering, his fidelity in labor, his nobility in patience! It is a glorious thing to be a youth! "I have written unto you, young men," says the apostle, "because ye are strong"—strong in hope, dauntless in resolution, guileless in affection, ardent in imagination, vigorous in execution, unburdened by care, untainted by vice and unsnared as yet by the great deceiver of souls. Oh, it is a glorious thing to see a young man standing thus in his strength at the very threshold of life, with all its amazing possibilities before him, girded with purity and ruddy with hope!

But oh, my dear friends, believe me, life is not an irresponsible race! Life is not a mere shake of a gambler's box! Life is not a haphazard voyage on an unruffled sea, to be taken without compass or rudder! Oh, life is a solemn trust! It is a voyage to a far-off port, and the soul that weighs anchor for that port needs an all-wise pilot. There are devil's bridges lurking near! There are storms station-signalled! Earnest work is ahead. We carry awful values, and there is a possibility that we may never reach the harbor. Unless every sail be thrown to the breeze, and unsleepingly we steer by the pole-star of God's ever-

lasting truth, we may fall upon the breakers and go down at last in eternal wreck! "O young man, rejoice then in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

Upon this passage, as now opened, I offer, in conclusion, one or two remarks. And first, as I look at it, religion is the only thing that can guarantee to any human being the full enjoyment of this world. Religion is the only sickle, heaven-tempered, put into our hands with which to harvest every blessing of this present life. It is the only key given into our possession that can slide the bolt and swing wide the gate to every avenue of true happiness earth contains. Is it not fitting, then, that God's children should be exhorted to "Rejoice evermore"? The Christian is reconciled to God. A Father's smile rests upon him, and a Father's benediction follows him. His present is luminous with love and his future with immortal hope. But the soul unfilial to God walks ever under his frown. Its every pleasure is forfeited. Not a moment's security is pledged. It tastes every cup of present happiness in peril of eternal unhappiness. Oh, tell me then, how can this world be to such a soul other than a very coffin and tomb of all possible cheer and joy? Strange cheat of the "father of

lies" to persuade the young that religion calls to gloom. It calls out of gloom into light ineffable, out of wrath into hope inexpressible. Impenitency is soul orphanage here and the prelude of never ending exile hereafter. An irreligious soul, then, it seems to me, should be inconsolable. Its reigning mood should be despondent. Laughter and mirth do not befit it. It should be habitually downcast. It should look upon life as a funeral. It should gaze upon the world as robed in sack-cloth. It should abandon pleasure and in solitude and mourning contemplate its swiftly approaching end. O my friends, I tell you honestly, had I no hope beyond this life, no sweet assurance of sin forgiven and a loving Saviour pledged to keep me and mine against that all-adjudging Day, I could not rest. Before Him who reads my heart, I declare to you that unless heaven should blot out my reason, not for a thousand worlds would I lay my head on my pillow one night, risking eternity, without a comfortable hope that Jesus is mine and I am his. Come life or come death, "It is well with my soul." For what would be earthly joys, if like him who sat at the table of the Sicilian tyrant, I must taste life's banquet with a gleaming sword above my head, suspended by a single hair? Could you sit in a pleasure boat with rollicking companions and calmly sip your glass of wine, if already in the rapids, and the thunder of the cata-

ract already filling your ears? O eternity! eternity! how can men thus walk daily upon its brink with no terror and no Christ!

How strange that men created for such honor can consent to cast such dishonor upon God's wondrous gift of existence! How many to-day are spending life seemingly without the faintest conception of life's true meaning! Made to be men, they are living like brutes; crowned with reason, they are wallowing in the filth of the senses. Made to hunger for immortal food, they are contented with husks; gifted with a far-reaching vision to scan immortality, they narrow their sight to an inch of time and live for the present hour. I tell you, my friends, there is not a reptile that crawls the earth to-day so witless. There is not a summer insect floating in the air, but, according to the measure of its being, honors the gift of life from a Creator's hand and loyally fulfils its humble destiny. But man, kingly man, made to lift his brow to the stars, and ere long to be the peer of angels, how often does his whole mortal career seem but one prolonged struggle to dis-crown himself and to defeat all the shining purposes of God in his creation!

I remark, finally, how many all about us to-day are spending life as if there were no appointed nor impending judgment hour; banishing from thought, it would

seem, all sense of personal accountability, all forelooking to a day of august reckoning with Him who has dowered the soul with its amazing powers and opportunities! How strangely do men forget that God means that all lower happiness shall simply subserve higher happiness, and that earth shall be but the *shining vestibule of heaven!* God indeed has made this world to be enjoyed. He has beneficently ordained that the eye, the ear, the taste, the touch and every rightly regulated bodily sense shall be an inlet of exquisite enjoyment, but enjoyment ministrative of higher enjoyment—enjoyment that shall illumine the reason, purify the affections, exalt the whole spiritual manhood and qualify us at last for the sinless citizenship of the skies. And yet, how many to-day, with more than Esau's folly, are bartering their immortal birthright for a mess of pottage; dragging down their noblest self into a very mire of carnality; putting out the eyes of conscience and making the soul, blood-bought by the Son of God, a pitiful slave to lust, fashion, frivolity, to the pleasures of a day and the dissipations of a night; all the while forgetting the coming judgment hour!

The celebrated Dr. Harvey once heard a lady speak of the pleasures of the playhouse. He asked her what they were. "First, the pleasure of anticipation before I go; secondly, the pleasure of participation while I am there;

and, thirdly, the pleasure of recollection in recalling the scene when it is over." "Madam," said that most perfect Christian gentleman, "Madam, you forget one pleasure." "What may it be?" "The pleasure of retrospection, when on a dying bed you shall look back on a life immersed in frivolities like that!" Oh, it is when we look at such squandered lives that we recall the words of Dr. Johnson to David Garrick, as together they looked upon a scene of glittering prodigality and godless mirth. "David," said the great moralist to the great actor, "David, these are the things that make death-beds terrible." Oh, then, think not that life is a few waves of breath, a few meaningless heart-throbs and all is over! Life, the accountable life of an undying man, who shall reveal to us all its present prophecies, all its future unfoldings? Accept, then, your Maker's gift, cheerfully, hopefully, joyfully accept it—but oh, accept it, I beseech you, young men, under some sober and manly sense of what life means! Stretch forth your hands to gather up every bounty of God's providence. Seize greedily upon every means of self-culture. Make the most of yourselves. Enjoy the world around you and the heavens above you, but enjoy all that you may build up a manhood for eternity.

"The dignity of man into your hands is given;
Oh, keep it well; with you it sinks or lifts itself to heaven."

Lay your foundations deep that the glittering top-stone of your character may be laid in heaven. Form your plans, pursue your pleasures, choose your companions, select your amusements, I beseech you, in view of the endless life and a dying last hour and know that at length your whole life, freighted with all its endowments and with all its possibilities and with all its ineffable issues, must stand in the scrutiny of God's judgment day.

STIRRING UP THE INWARD GIFT

“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee.”—2 Tim 1: 6.

STIRRING UP THE INWARD GIFT

The word "gift" is here evidently used in a comprehensive sense, as denoting not only the ecclesiastical function of preaching to which Timothy had now been set apart, but also all those personal and circumstantial qualifications by which it had been put in the power of this young disciple to be useful to the Church and to the world. This gift of Timothy then included, we may suppose, his natural endowments, his gracious experiences, his providential opportunities, in short, his entire personal outfit and preparation for the Christian service to which God had called him—a gift divinely conferred but which it lay with him to stir up, stimulate to its proper activity and make the most of for his Saviour's honor. "I put thee in remembrance," says the aged Paul to this son of his in the gospel, "that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee."

There is a wide difference, we must remember, between a gift divinely put into a man and that same gift humanly brought out of him. God puts gifts in us; that is his sovereign work. He requires that we stir them up and bring them out; that is our human duty. In this matter of original endowments, a moment's thought will show us,

I think, that the divine Benefactor follows almost precisely the same rule of bestowal that he adopts throughout his material and providential kingdoms. If you will notice, God seldom confers any blessing in this world in a matured and consummated form. In nearly every case, the recipient himself has a supplementary work to do, to bring up the divine benefit to completion. Throughout the kingdoms of nature and providence as well as grace, heaven's bounties are for the most part rudimental in their character; that is, gifts in germ, seed-forms of beneficence which man himself is to cultivate, develop and train up to their intended magnitude and ripeness of value. The ordinary blessings of life, unless man is in a state of barbarism, I need not remind you are seldom or never conferred ready for use. His food he must wrest from the unwilling earth by the sweat of his face; his dwelling, covering him from the storm, and his raiment, shielding him from the cold, are given not in the finished fabric but in the raw material. Man himself must penetrate the forests for his timber, delve the mines for metals, gather the fleece from the roaming flocks, cross the seas and traverse distant climes for the materials for his sustenance, his dignity and his comfort. Moreover, he must invent machinery, harness the forces of nature to the chariot of his power, apply the principles of science and subsidize to his use

the accumulated experience of generations, before he can stand forth the undisputed master and lord of all that domain of earthly blessings which a bountiful Creator has put in his power.

What is true in the material and providential realms, is equally so, I apprehend, in the mental and the spiritual. I think one might as reasonably expect to strike a spade carelessly into the earth and bring to light precious gems already cut and polished for some queenly setting, or into a gold-mine and bring up gold, not in ore form, rough and lusterless, but smelted and coined already into glittering eagles or sovereigns, and with the national imprint fresh upon them, as to expect to look down into the unstirred strata of his own mind, and find there faculties and endowments already polished and developed up to that measure of power which our Creator intends they shall ultimately wield. God puts gifts into us; he leaves us to stir them up, bring them out, educate them up to their preordained standard of efficiency. It is not necessary that we now stop to raise the question so often discussed by scholars and educators, Which has the greater influence on character and ultimate success in life, original endowments or education and the force of circumstances? It may be readily granted that you cannot educate unless you have something to educate. You cannot bring out of a man that

which his Creator never put in him. No amount of training will accomplish much if there be not native gifts to start with. But this I take to be the point now involved in Paul's exhortation to Timothy: that whatever a man's wealth of native ability, whatever regality or splendor of natural powers God has invested him with, those powers will be practically worthless to the world if neglected, if allowed to lie fallow, unstirred by personal exertion. I suspect that few persons dream what powers God has put into them, until they have searched for them and honestly tried to bring them out.

It is not to be denied that there is a gift sometimes conferred upon men which we call genius; that is, some special and extraordinary aptitude or bias of the whole mind and the whole man toward some particular calling or service in life. I am not now speaking of exceptional developments, a morbid precocity, but of this divine bestowment in its healthy and normal work. I am bold to say, too, whatever the popular misconception, that genius with no will power behind it, with no helm, and whose sails are left to flap idly in the calm of indolence and whim and impulse and caprice, never yet laid the world under any heavy debt of obligation. True genius, whatever else it may be, is always a talent for hard work,—for earnest, concentrated and unflagging hard work. Michael Angelo called it

"*Eternal patience.*" Those of us past middle life and New England born were accustomed, a third of a century ago, to look up to that colossal statesman of our land, Daniel Webster, whom in our pride and well-nigh idolatrous affection we called the "godlike," and imagine that he owed his mighty intellectual kingship over men to the prodigal favor of heaven. Unquestionably he did. And yet he has left on record this testimony for the encouragement of the less gifted: "Whoever has worked hard for any degree of success attained, never a man worked harder than I." "Men give me some credit for genius," said Alexander Hamilton, one of the most brilliant rising statesmen in our early American history, "but all the genius I have lies in just this: When I have a subject in hand I study it profoundly. Day and night it is before me. I explore it in all its bearings. My mind becomes pervaded with it and the effort I make the people are pleased to call the fruit of genius. *It is the fruit of labor and thought.*"

You have listened to some queen of song, or to some matchless instrumental performer and you have exclaimed, "What genius!" "What a gift!" Not always have you stopped to remember the patient and painful years of training before that wonderful perfection has been reached, before those intractable muscles and rude organs have been subdued to such miracles of skill. A great composer was

once praised for the peculiar ease of his productions. "Ah," said he, "but with what difficulty has this ease been acquired!"

When a famous painter was reproached by a patron that he had charged him fifty guineas for a painting which it took but ten days to paint, "You forget," replied the great artist, "that it has taken thirty years of incredible toil now to paint that picture in ten days." But I need not multiply testimony like this, for it is the universal verdict of all who have reached eminence along any line of human endeavor that, whatever the original gift, enduring success crowns only strenuous and unremitting personal application.

My friends, God may not have created us prodigies of native ability in any direction. He may have dowered us with no dazzling original powers of any kind. But this he has done: he has put into each one of us, as his human child, some gift that he has put into no other creature of his hand. Not a human being lives, high or humble, but has received his own "proper gift of God"—a gift in some respects unlike any other ever conferred. Not a man or woman lives but has a talent peculiar to himself or herself. Not one is so meagerly endowed that in some direction he cannot achieve superiority and make his individuality felt by all around him. Whatever that pe-

culiar gift or talent may be, I am prepared to affirm that if we have entered Christ's service, if we have given our saved life gratefully and loyally to him, first of all we owe the gift to Christ our Lord. If our original faculties, if our intellectual acquirements, if our artistic skill, if our providential opportunities or social position or life-discipline have been such that in any direction and in any special degree we can now make ourselves a moral, social or spiritual force among men, we are bound as Christ's disciples, unless I mistake the whole tenor of his teachings, to lay that special capability at his divine feet, baptize it with his spirit, and, so far as in us lies, make it a hallowed instrumentality for the honor of his name and the spread of his kingdom through the earth.

Right at this point, a consideration of vital importance, as it seems to me, to this whole topic in hand presses upon our notice. It is this: that when you and I, my fellow worker, shall be called at last to render our great life-account for the use of gifts received, those gifts will be recalled not as originally given, but as He who gave them has put it into our human power to enlarge, multiply and develop them. If you will turn now to that notable parable of the talents which Matthew has recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of his Gospel, you will notice that the withering anathema there pronounced on the servant who

had received but one talent was not pronounced because that servant had lost anything or squandered anything. Not at all. He had hidden his talent away in a place of perfect safety. He had buried it, doubtless, under cover of darkness in an unfrequented spot and with the most judicious secretiveness in the bosom of the earth. He brought it back to his summoning lord just as intact and uninjured as it was at the moment he received it. But the terrible rebuke that fell on his recreant head at his lord's return was evoked, you remember, by the simple fact that he had done nothing with his talent, had not carried it into trade, wisely invested it and legitimately augmented its original value. That was the one blasting and unattonable sin of defalcation laid to his charge, as he went forth speechless into outer darkness.

Now, my friends, manifestly it will not be enough that you and I return our Creator a gift of his just as he conferred it. That gift must be multiplied, educated, increased up to the measure of our providential ability to increase it. I take this to be the clear doctrine of accountability as set forth by our Lord so graphically in his parable of the talents.

So important is this principle involved, let me dwell upon it for a moment. Suppose, then, in the way of illustration, that I owe to my Maker to-day a given amount

of physical service, of bodily labor. Like those perhaps who built the old temple, there is due from me a certain outlay and appliance of physical strength for the honor and glory of God. If then, to start with, my full bodily furnishing could be rated at fifty-pounds power, but if with a proper development of my muscular resources, through the aid of modern athletics, I could, in due time, just as easily wield a force of five hundred pounds as fifty, is it not plain that when called to report for my quatum of service, I must report not simply the fifty-pound talent with which I started, but the five-hundred-pound talent which was the natural and normal limit of my physical ability? So in other spheres, it seems to me, precisely the same principle applies; along other lines evidently the same principle holds. Let us suppose one is natively endowed with a certain intellectual force for his Maker's honor and the benefit of men. But if by proper self-effort and discipline, that native mind-force can be almost indefinitely increased, think you that potential increase will be uncalled for at last? So, one has an original talent for speech, a native tongue-power with which to move and mold men—and a mighty power it is! But by practice, courage, discipline, timeliness of effort, that speech-gift can receive ten, twenty, fifty times its present efficiency. How will that gift be required at last, think you, my

brother, in germ, or will it be required with all the addendum which that providential power had been given to make of it? Judge ye!

So whatever gift or opportunity any man or woman has to-day for Christian labor and influence and discipleship (as I understand discipleship) the great Accountant in the august hour of final reviewal will call that disciple to answer, *not* for that gift or power as it may now be—dwarfed, mute, latent, crippled, the napkin in which it was hidden turned into a grave-cloth, but for all that it was possible by diligent self-development to make out of that original and shining endowment. If this view now taken be correct, how sad the spectacle furnished by the nominal church of God of unstirred personal gifts! The waste of mind and life-force total and irretrievable by the unconverted multitudes around us, we need not now stop to deplore. But among the enrolled loyalists of the heavenly King, the acknowledged stewards of the mysteries of God, what mines of spiritual power all unworked, what gifts unemployed, what talents buried in the earth!

It was a humiliating opinion expressed years ago by one of the most eminent and beloved pastors of this land, Albert Barnes, that hardly more than one-fifth of the laity, even in the most favored churches of that day, hardly one in five could be reckoned upon by any pastor in the crisis

of a true, aggressive onset upon the strongholds of sin and unrighteousness. They counted numerically. They swelled the mere physical bulk of the visible communion of the Lord. That was about all the outcome of their professed fealty to the cause of the Master. O friends, not in this world will be known the difference between a gift used and unused for the divine glory of God! Historical illustrations could be cited in abundance. Let one or two suffice:

John Kitto, at his death, occurring not many years ago, had placed himself in the unchallenged forefront of the Biblical scholars of his age. John Kitto began life in an English poorhouse,—a child of poverty, wretchedness and abuse, without friends or station. But he early gave his heart to Christ and with his heart he gave his talents. He soon exhibited remarkable powers. By the most undaunted energy and perseverance he acquired an education. He traveled widely, labored indefatigably through a long life, and died leaving the impress of his masterly scholarship upon the whole Christian literature of his generation. Where is there a Bible student to-day in the whole English-speaking world unfamiliar with the name of John Kitto?

Edward Irving, the poor waif that came up from a London workhouse, might have lived and died an un-

heard-of Scotch tanner, as his father died before him, among the hills of Dumfriesshire, Scotland. But he was not contented to neglect native gifts, and at length moved the whole English parliament and all London by the might of his Christian eloquence.

Look at the life of Adoniram Judson, the missionary, a poor, poverty-trained boy in eastern Massachusetts, which Theodore Parker declared in its finished record before the world, "a grander spectacle than the Parthenon." Try for one moment to span the difference between talents like Judson's, from early youth devoted to God's service and humanity, and such talents running to waste, never heard of or employed in the great world-vineyard of the Master.

Or, not to instance merely such marked historic examples, let me now ask, what of every private Christian in each one of our churches of no more education or native ability than John Vassar, or Kingsley Burnell, or Jerry McAuley or Dwight Moody? Should he not, nevertheless, use his gift and every opportunity and power of speech and example to win men to righteousness and the blessed life beyond? How long, think you, would these churches of ours remain handicapped by the customs of the world, unblest of the Master's radiant presence? O my brethren, in contrast with what might be done, look at the unstirred gifts to-day in the Church of God!

But I must not close without calling your attention to the peculiar timeliness of this address to Timothy. When these words were written to Timothy he was a young man. I would not say that such an exhortation would be out of place addressed to any age or class in life. And yet, I suspect that Paul would never have had the heart to send such a message as this to Timothy if his head had already been silvered over with the frosts of years, and he had been nearing the sunset of life. It is no easy matter, my friends, as you well know, radically to reconstruct any man's habits and methods of life when past youth and early manhood. In youth-time mind and heart are plastic and flexible, quickly responding to noble appeal and educational enthusiasm. New habits are taken on easily. Not much can you do with the gnarled and century-twisted patriarchs of the forest. Hence all wise pastors have ever deemed it of the greatest importance that at the very birth-hour of Christian character, those entering into open discipleship to Christ should come at once into a clear and unmistakable apprehension of this great New Testament doctrine of stewardship. According to my experience, permit me to add, the sentiments and principles of Christian living then adopted by the young disciple, in the great majority of cases cling to him through life and essentially modify and determine the whole aggregated life-result

of his personal connection with the Church of God. May I be pardoned then, if, addressing my younger friends to-day, I put you in remembrance that you stir up betimes the gift which God has put into you?

To do this, it is not always imperative that you occupy a pulpit or engage in professional evangelism. There are different ways to serve God. George Macdonald in one of his books tells of a humble Scotch cobbler who, converted on his death-bed, wanted to get well, simply that he might thenceforward show the world "how a Christian could make shoes." Love to Christ, flaming in the human heart, glorifies the lowest toil of earth. "O God," said Kepler, prince of astronomers and prince among believers, "O God, I think thy thoughts after thee!" as he sought to find God's plan in the flashing swing of the stars.

While Professor Henry of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington was prosecuting, a few years ago, his remarkable experiments in telegraphy, when about to perform a critical test, he would turn to his assistant and reverently say, "Be silent, I am now going to ask God a question!" thus adoringly laying all his science and its outcome at the feet of Him to whom he devoted his life.

When Stanley found Livingstone, nearly a score of years ago, in the depths of Africa, dead on his knees in a negro hut, he soon found by his inanimate form his diary, and

almost its last entry read as follows: "March 19, 1872. Birthday. My Jesus, my King, my Life, my All! Again I dedicate my whole self to Thee." The world now has the open secret of David Livingstone's life: a consecrated purpose to open up the Dark Continent to the light of modern civilization and to the light which shines from the hill of Calvary.

Whatever our providential calling, our aim and our purpose should be to enthrone God and his righteousness finally around this earth. When an early Spanish explorer from the tops of the Andes first caught sight of the mighty Pacific, history tells us that he descended to its shore, waded into the water, bearing in one hand a drawn sword, and in the other the banner of Castile, and took possession of the ocean and all the coasts washed by its waves for the crown of Spain. Brethren, you and I serve another King. From continent to continent, from shore to shore this ransomed world belongs to Jesus Christ. Are you and I, who, by and by, with the great multitude yonder, shall share in the eternal victory, doing our part to-day, with unsheathed swords, in the mighty conflict?

"Christ for the world we sing;
The world to Christ we bring
 With loving zeal;
The poor and them that mourn,
The faint and overborne,

Sin-sick and sorrow-worn,
Whom Christ doth heal."

"Christ for the world we sing;
The world to Christ we bring
With fervent prayer;
The wayward and the lost,
By restless passions tossed,
Redeemed at countless cost
From dark despair."

GOD'S PART AND OUR PART IN REDEMPTION

"And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed."—
Luke 17: 14.

GOD'S PART AND OUR PART IN REDEMPTION

This was said, you will remember, of the ten lepers whom our Saviour met at the entrance-way of a certain Samaritan village. At his approach these unfortunate men, we read, lifted up the cry, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" And the simple record of the evangelist is: "When he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests." This direction was given evidently in accordance with a Mosaic law making it the duty of a leper, whenever or wherever healed, to report himself to the priest for a certificate of cure, and for official testimony that he was no longer to be regarded as ceremonially or socially unclean. Christ, then, meets the earnest supplication of this leprous band with a simple command "Go show yourselves unto the priests!" He does not at once put forth his miraculous energy in their behalf. He imposes an antecedent condition. He couples the divine and wonderful blessing which he is about to bestow with a specific human duty which they are to perform.

"And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed." Not *before* they went, not *after* they went, but "*as they went.*" The human obedience and the divine bless-

ing were thus yoked together, and walked abreast along the same Jerusalem highway. Priority, antecedence, is affirmed of neither the divine nor the human agency; they were simultaneous and inseparable.

It is not my purpose at this time to enter upon the purely metaphysical question. What is the precise causal relation existing between the divine will and the human will in the great matter of the soul's conversion to God? My opinion is, I may simply say in passing, that a full understanding of this subject, metaphysically, lies beyond the powers of the human mind. Philosophy, I take it, when on flashing wing she has soared to her proudest heights of exploration, will never be able to tell us how God can create or govern a free being. And yet freedom, absolute creature liberty, is the very foundation-postulate of all moral government and of all human responsibility. How God can be sovereign over his universe, as absolutely over the world of spirit as of matter, over every atom floating in space and over every volition of every creature he has made, is a problem beyond human explanation. How the eternal energy and foreordinating counsels of the Almighty can thus impinge on the orbit of finite liberty, interpenetrate it and direct toward a predetermined end the whole aggregated current of human activity, and yet man's freedom, perfect accountability, remain intact and unhin-

dered—this is a problem, I repeat, human reason shall never solve in this world. And yet, with all the speculative mystery and fog oftentimes thrown around this subject, these two great twin truths, God's absolute regency over men, and man's absolute liberty of choice, have stood forth for generations, pillared in the faith of the Christian Church as the summation of Scriptural teaching and as the only goal at which the world's keenest and profoundest thinking can at last arrive.

But, as I have said, my present purpose is practical rather than speculative. Whatever obscurity technical theologians, in time past, have thrown around the connection between divine and human agency, between man's duty and God's grace in the work of religion, the Bible is responsible for none of it. The Bible is a practical book; it, therefore, never arrays God's sovereignty and man's freedom in an attitude of antagonism to each other, but always in rational coincidence and in perfect practical harmony.

Why, then, the great question now arises, do we in our human teachings and theorizings and in our own actual experiences so often fall into mental confusion and inconsistency on the whole subject? I answer, first: because the great mass of mankind forget that religion is a thing first of all to *be lived out* and not a thing first of all to *be*

thought out, a thing to be practiced and not a thing to be abstractly formulated by the intellect. Now neither Christ nor his apostles, I am bold to say, in all their teachings, ever announced a truth, a fact or tenet which was not meant to touch human life practically, experimentally, and enter at once as a spiritual factor into the great current of the soul's everlasting history. It is true, I admit, that the truths of the Bible not infrequently have been catalogued by religious instructors in a way to imply that there is a wide practical difference between them. Thus by many religion has been set forth under the two heads of doctrine and precept; as though a "doctrine" was a thing simply for the head, and a "precept" a thing for the heart, or conduct. Thus we hear of doctrinal preaching and practical preaching. But as I understand it, both the doctrines and precepts of the gospel are but different sides of the same great body of spiritual truth revealed for our eternal redemption.

A gospel precept, to my mind, has no true power or pungency that is not rooted directly in some gospel doctrine. A gospel doctrine, on the other hand, is most unworthily preached which in the end does not flower into some living precept or golden rule, fitted to adorn and regulate the whole accountable life of man.

The whole gospel, as I read it, both doctrinally and pre-

ceptively, sums itself up in a series of commands to religious activity; calls to personal human duty. As the royal preacher puts it, "This is the conclusion of the whole matter, that we fear God and keep his commandments." It is, however, not to be denied that many of the doctrines of the gospel, when brought under examination soon run back into speculative mystery,—doctrines like the Trinity, the atonement, regeneration and the effectual influences of the Holy Spirit on human hearts. But these great doctrines, I now ask you to observe, touch our finite life, so to speak, only at a single angle. We do not see the whole truth. It was never designed that we should see the whole truth. And we, further, do not need to see the whole truth in order to get all the intended religious benefit out of it, any more than we need to see the whole of a majestic cloud which on a summer's day rides up into the sky, suddenly darkens the whole heavens, pours at length its refreshing blessing upon us, and then glides silently away into the trackless depths of space.

So these mighty truths of our redemption, which center in the very being of the triune Godhead, sweep down upon us from their majestic heights, touch our mortal life at a single point, do a blessed work for our fallen souls, and then instantly stretch away into illimitable depths, where no finite reason can follow them.

But because we cannot grasp a doctrine speculatively does it follow that we cannot embrace it religiously? Certainly not. No more than it follows that a fisherman, 'whose hut is on the ocean side cannot cruise along the coast and gain his livelihood from the beneficial waters, because, forsooth, he does not understand scientifically all the depths and mysteries of that boundless main which evermore thunders at his feet. Now, as I look at it, there are two ways to study a religious doctrine—a legitimate, and, as I hold, an illegitimate. I put no ban on the human reason. God himself has set it, as the very Kohinoor of faculties, in the dazzling crown of our manhood. If there be any truths in this universe fitted to stir to profoundest depths the human intellect, I believe them to be the truths of this revelation.

But, as we have now seen, every great doctrine of Scripture has two distinct relations, a relation toward man and a relation toward God. Every gospel doctrine has two sides to it, a Godward side and a manward side. On the lower and manward side that doctrine enters the sphere of human accountability and concerns human duty. But on the upper or Godward side that doctrine stretches away from mortal gaze, an incomprehensible and mountainous mystery, winding backward, it may be, through eternal cycles until it nestles at last in the very bosom of

uncreated Deity. With that side of the doctrine, I hold, my finite reason has legitimately nothing to do.

I am now in the region of worship, of adoring, speechless faith and no longer in the sphere of analytic reason. But on the lower side of that doctrine, when it touches my human obligation and concerns my human practice, I am bound to use my reason to the utmost, to analyze, discriminate and apply that doctrine, in all its manifold bearings, to my human welfare, duty and destiny. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may *do all the words of this law.*"

And just as there is a manward side and a Godward side to every gospel doctrine, so there is what we may call a human-agency side, and a divine-agency side. Paul writes the Philippians: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Thus in the gospel plan, man has his sphere and God has his sphere. Man works and God works. They work together, and in no instance do the Scriptures imply that there is the slightest jar between them. But now, how many Christians, instead of making the doctrine of election, for example, or God's personal supremacy over this world, what he intended those doctrines to be, a comfort, a joy, a rock of

everlasting assurance to his children, make them only a mental torment all their days! And why? Just because, while in other matters they are willing to use their common sense, in religion they imagine that every-day common sense is to be ruled out, and in place of it is to be used a kind of uncommon or metaphysical sense.

Men find no trouble with these great doctrines in transacting their daily business, in raising their yearly crops, in performing their stated domestic duties, although they enter as really into all these departments as into the religious department. But when men deal with religion they must straightway become profound and impractical philosophers.

Now, my friends, as I have already said, these great doctrines of God's elective grace and providential sovereignty over human affairs, have been revealed to us in his Word for a directly practical end. They are the most practical truths in all the world, and only as practical truths have we any concern with them. If we choose to grapple with them as purely metaphysical puzzles or conundrums, the struggle possibly may have some value as a sort of mental gymnastic, but we have passed over, we must remember, from the manward side of the doctrine to the Godward side. We are beyond our powers. No human mind, I speak unqualifiedly, ever yet understood, metaphysically,

the doctrine of election,—that is, the exact relation between divine grace and human accountability—and no human mind ever will understand it, in this world; we may be sure of that.

Not that reason contradicts it, but reason cannot compass it. It must, therefore, be embraced, if at all, practically; and that, in fact, is the only way it was ever intended to be embraced by any human soul. But now, because we cannot understand just how God works in the great scheme of human salvation, shall we for that reason refuse to do our work? Because we do not know just what God's sphere is, shall we neglect our own sphere? If the pathway of divine agency in religion is left somewhat obscure, the pathway of human agency, surely, is made so plain and straightforward that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. The Bible abounds in the most explicit directions for our human guidance in all religious matters. To neglect, then, to use our own free agency in gaining heaven, because we do not know just what God's agency will be in connection with ours, would be as irrational as if a soldier in war should refuse to obey his captain or colonel and to march and fight with his regiment, because he did not know just what the plan of the whole campaign was, as it lay in the mind of the lieutenant-general, or just what the policy of the government

itself was, as it lay, perhaps undisclosed as yet, in the solitary brain of the prime minister or president of the country. Let that soldier in the ranks do his duty, you would say, and leave the minister or president to do his, and there will be no clash between them.

I wish now, my friends, to apply this whole subject, thus far perhaps somewhat abstrusely expounded, to several most important and vital practical particulars.

And first, there is a large class of persons, I am led to think, in every church-going community who thus far stand aloof from the duties of personal religion, because they do not as yet intellectually comprehend all the truths and doctrines and mysteries that in any and every way stand related to the subject. These persons, on closer acquaintance, we find are laboriously striving to enter heaven through the gateway of their own reason. They seem determined not to yield to the plain requirements of the gospel until with their *finite* minds they shall understand *infinite* truth. They have a stupendous contract on their hands. Unwilling to become Christians in God's way, which is obedience, they are struggling to become Christians in their way, which is speculation. Hence they have resolved, apparently, not to undertake their own duty, however simple, until they shall know just how the Almighty will perform his work when they have performed

theirs. Now the conversion of such persons, it is safe to say, unless this whole base of procedure is changed, is as far off as the sunset of eternity.

But there is another class of the undecided and the unconverted, who, I am convinced, are in far more honest difficulty than those now mentioned. There are many, I am confident, to-day in every Christian congregation who sincerely desire to become Christians; to take their stand openly on the Lord's side; but they are in doubt just how to begin, just how to take the first step. They have been accustomed to think all their life long of religion as something very mysterious and incomprehensible. They have somehow got the idea that they must wait God's time in this matter,—wait for some marvelous work of the Holy Spirit to be wrought upon them; some strange, inner revelation of divine grace, or irresistible outside pressure or revival to lift them up and sweep them along as on a flood-tide of light and excitement up to the very gates of Paradise.

But, friends, as the gospel teaches religion, it is the simplest thing in all the world. We are to do our work and let God do his work. But you say, Must not divine grace change the heart? Are we not dependent on the regenerating Spirit from above, in conversion? Certainly we are; but that is God's matter, not yours, or mine. We are

to attend to our agency and let God attend to his. We are to keep in our sphere, and not try to enter God's sphere and do his work as well as ours.

Now if you will look at the commands of our Saviour, when he called his first disciples into his service, you will notice how wonderfully simple those commands were: "Follow me;" "Take my yoke;" "Deny yourself;" "Bear your cross." Nothing is said about getting a "hope," about going through some marvelous inward "experience," before they could begin. Nothing is said about having a conscious change of heart before they could start for heaven, or do Christian service. They did have a change of heart, it is true, the very moment they began to follow Jesus. But that was God's work, not theirs. Their simple duty was to take up their cross and follow Christ whithersoever he led the way, and the instant they did that God did all the rest. How or when or in what manner God did his work was no concern of theirs. Their one duty was to *obey Christ*.

Now, my dear friend, you honestly wish to become a Christian, but you think you must wait for some marvelous experience, for some irresistible Pentecostal power to swoop down upon you and instantly fill all the sluggish sails of your irresolution and, almost whether you will or not, drive you into the kingdom of heaven. Until this

"experience" comes you think you cannot start to be a Christian. Now, in all this Bible I challenge you to find me one passage or clause of a passage that authorizes you or me to wait for anything one minute, as unconverted sinners, before following Christ and obeying his divine commands.

We are not asked to regenerate our own hearts. That is God's work. We are commanded to follow Christ. We are not asked to beget within ourselves this or that wonderful experience; but we are commanded to take up our cross, turn our back on sin, humbly seek Christ's forgiving love and evermore serve him as our chosen Leader and Lord.

And now, my friend, if you will thus begin, you need not wait a day, an hour, one minute. Begin with the first duty at hand, which you know you ought to do as a Christian. Then take the second duty, and then the third. And if thus you go forward and God does not at length meet you, with all the wealth of his omnipotent grace, yours will be the first instance in all the history of God's ransomed Church, where a merciful God was not willing to do his part when a seeking human soul was ready to do its part in the great work of salvation. "And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed."

And now a word to some who are just beginning, as they humbly trust, the Christian life.

Great mental confusion and suffering at times, I am convinced, is occasioned young disciples because they do not rightly apprehend the simple, practical teaching of the New Testament on this subject of the new birth or change of heart. Many new converts, I find, are not contented to do simply their own duty, but they must distress themselves lest somehow God should fail to do his part of the work. They seek for evidence prematurely that they have been converted. Almost before they have begun to follow Jesus or carry their cross at all, they aspire to possess all the most vivid and joyful experiences of the most advanced Christians. Hence, instead of keeping their eye on the distant goal and pressing steadily toward it, they halt every few steps in the race and sit down to examine themselves and see if the divine Spirit is actually producing in their souls all the anticipated fruits of regeneration. They are willing to do their duty, but are troubled lest the blessed Master shall not fulfil all his divine promises. Hence if a dark day comes on, when hope is not quite so bright and happiness not quite so jubilant, they get discouraged and feel almost like giving up the whole attempt to live a Christian life.

Now, my young fellow believers, let me say to you, in all frankness and kindness, that your inward experiences and your inward happiness are something with which you

have nothing whatever to do. It is a very small matter, in my judgment, whether your experiences to begin with are of one kind or another. It is a very small matter whether you are happy or unhappy. The great, the only vital question is, Are you holding on in obedience to Christ? Are you bearing your cross daily after him? Are you keeping his commandments? If you are, then let inward experiences take care of themselves. Those matters will all come right in due time, as God Almighty is faithful and true.

Turn back to those lepers. How were they cured? Simply by obeying Christ. Going to the priest was their work. Healing their loathsome malady was the miraculous work of Jesus.

What, now, if those men had conducted themselves after the fashion of some modern Christians? Proceeding a few steps, they would have stopped for personal examination, to see if the cure had really begun; then perhaps a little farther, and another halt; and so they would have gone hesitatingly along, their gaze selfward and not forward and by their double effort they would have forfeited, or would have deserved to forfeit, the very blessing they were after. But only one thought possessed these men, and that was, with all speed to carry out Christ's command. "As they went, they were cleansed."

And this incident, as it seems to me, illustrates perfectly the operations of the human mind in the whole realm of religion. A Christian looks within himself to find evidence that he is born again. He wishes to know if he really loves God and Christ and is truly penitent and believing, and, therefore, instead of going earnestly forward in the plain path of duty and letting love and penitence and faith kindle by the way, and flame out as he goes along, he must stop every little while and analyze himself, feel his own pulse—to see if he is alive—lay hold of some sensitive Christian affection, throttle it and hold it up to the light to see if it is a genuine Christian grace. Of course such an unnatural vivisection of one's self kills out the very emotion he is seeking for.

So with happiness. Many Christians mourn that they get so little happiness out of their religion. Why is it? I suspect because they are seeking happiness, directly for happiness. Now, my friends, let me tell you a secret. No human being ever yet got happiness out of religion or out of anything else, who lived directly for it. Happiness, to be found, must not be pursued. Pursue it and it will surely outrun you. But would you be a truly happy Christian, forget all about your own happiness. Trample it sublimely under foot, and let mind and heart and soul be filled, flooded with the great and glorious inspirations of

Christian service and Christlike self-denial, and then happiness at length will flow in upon you in blessed and overwhelming measure, just because you thought nothing about it. "And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed."

In like manner this principle might be applied to the whole work of Christian experience.

I hear Christians praying to be sanctified,—and then I see them sit down, fold their hands and wait for the supplicated blessing to come, as though God would take up grace or holiness like some portable substance or fluid and convey it into their hearts, independent of their own exertion or agency. But, friends, remember this, an indolent, lethargic and undutiful Christian never yet grew in the grace of God since the world stood. "As they went, they were cleansed."

So in affliction. Christians often examine themselves to see if they are duly profiting under the rod. But not unlikely they find their hearts insensible, stunned by the great blow that has fallen upon them. But let them resignedly and filially do and bear all God's sovereign will, and afterwards, though not at the time, they shall see that they were indeed purified and refined, as patiently and uncomplainingly they walked through the glistening furnace of trial. "As they went, they were cleansed."

And now I conclude with a word. Brethren, let us never forget that the essence of religion, as taught in the New Testament, is simple obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ, and not the intellectual mastery of a body of metaphysical divinity. Religion, indeed, has a supernatural side to it; but that is a side to be embraced by faith, and not to be subjugated by the reason. These infinite truths of our redemption we are to study as they touch our human life practically; beyond that we have no religious concern with them. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," were Christ's parting words to his disciples. Obedience—obedience, then, to the great Captain of our salvation should wave the single watchword on every blood-crimsoned banner of our crucified Lord. We are not to waste our spiritual energy on themes beyond us. We are not to distress ourselves with immature and as yet unsatisfactory experiences. Faithfully we are to do our heaven-appointed human duty, and leave *results* with God.

Going forward then, as Jesus bids us, on the upward shining way, at length, as he is faithful, our sin-sick souls shall be gloriously and eternally healed. "And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed."

THE ALABASTER BOX

"To what purpose is this waste?"—Matt. 26: 8.

THE ALABASTER BOX

"There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."
—Matt. 26:7-13.

I doubt if in the whole Gospel is recorded a more touching incident than this—an instance of more genuine and outgushing affection for the Master, prompted not, as some thought, by caprice or love of ostentation, but simply from a necessity of the heart, ever to adopt if possible some worthy outward expression of an inward and irrepressible love. To those who could not understand the love, the act of course seemed untimely and exaggerated, an inexcusable waste of valuable property. But the loving Saviour's glance measured it at once. He saw that only thus could a heart yearning to do him loving homage, and bursting with pent-up emotion, overflow conventional barriers and lay at his feet a fit symbol of undying grati-

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tude. He therefore rebuked the mercenary comment of the disciples, "To what purpose is this waste?" He bestowed upon the trembling woman his approbation, tenderly accepted her offering, and honored her with the prophecy that wherever his gospel should be preached this act of hers should be told as her perpetual memorial.

I think, my friends, that through this briefly recorded gospel incident, we may obtain, as through a lens, an insight into a great principle, or method, which largely underlies the whole divine administration over this world. I suspect there is an impulse with most of us critically and irreverently at times to put the question in respect to many events transpiring under the divine Ruler, "To what purpose is this waste?"

Our fallen minds instinctively estimate things by their immediate, visible and utilitarian importance. God's utility covers eternity as well as time. With him spiritual things are the true entities, of which visible things are but the fleeting shadows. Hence the continual jar between his wisdom and ours. In our presumption we often stand as censors over his doings and sanctions, with that sordid query of the first disciples.

Throughout most departments of the divine working in this world, as open to our human inspection, we notice what seems to us at first sight to be a remarkable prodig-

gality or waste of causative power as related to the actual effects produced. This prodigality of cause, this apparent disproportion of means to ends, we must believe is only apparent, not real, and arises simply from the peculiar angle at which the divine working must ever, from the nature of the case, be viewed by finite vision.

Let us proceed, then, to illustrate the proposition laid down, by brief glances into the fields of nature, history and divine providence.

I. From nature. Our theme might receive almost indefinite confirmation. How much of waste to hasty, sordid view appears throughout the physical creation of God? How much of beauty and wealth have been lavished upon this world which mere utilitarianism can never explain! In the depths of the ocean what pearly treasures are hidden! In unfathomed forests what countless flowers arrayed in more than Solomon's glory exhale their fragrance to gladden no human sense! "Of a thousand seeds," says the poet, "God often brings but one to bear." In polar waters, in tropic glens, in undelved mines of the earth, what minerals, fruits and animals have never yet rendered tribute to man, creation's lord! And yet, as though giving did only enrich him, out of the urn of his exhaustless bounty does the infinite Father continue to flood the world with wealth.

Admitting now for a moment to our contemplation the light of geology, and turning our eyes back to that long, chaotic track of earth's history predating the creation of man, what wastes of ages, what mighty fathomless cycles of barren time, lie forever engulfed in that interval, spanning from the "beginning," when darkness brooded upon the formless void, up to the jubilant morning when Eden bloomed and man, a living soul, stood in his Maker's image, king of the garden!

Leaving our own world, and suffering speculation for an instant to roam among the constellations above us: some twenty-five years ago an eminent English scholar launched upon the attention of the scientific world a book entitled, "The Plurality of Worlds," wherein he sustained, with wide learning and much plausible argument, the theory that this earth of ours is the only inhabited orb among the stellar lights of heaven; that utter barrenness of life reigns through the universe save upon this planet created and furnished for the residence of man. This, at the time, startling theory of Whewell has been ably endorsed and reproduced recently by an American author in a book entitled "The Arena of the Throne." Professor Proctor, probably the foremost astronomical lecturer, maintains, in a modified form, this same Whewellian view, holding it to be an indisputable conclusion of the latest re-

searches in science, that only a very small fraction at most of our visible universe can be at this moment the abode of conscious life. But whether agreeing with this extreme position or not, beyond a question astronomy now teaches that there are many worlds in the firmament sweeping to-day through their tireless orbits, carrying no freight of creature life; uninhabited, incandescent or blasted orbs of mysterious fate, yet forever hasting on their silent journeys, sublimely symboling to our mortal vision the inscrutable paths of our God. In our presumption we may question him of his ways, as through nature, geology, astronomy, mystery after mystery unfolds itself to our gaze; we may even cry out in pain to the Infinite Planner, "To what purpose is this waste?" But no answer comes to our inquiry. Girded with sovereignty and secrecy the All-Wise works his pleasure and before the enigmas of his creation, at present, we can only be silent and adore.

II. Leaving now the outside universe and realm of matter, let us glance for a moment at the domain of human history. And, I ask first, Why must this world of ours be kept in weary waiting four thousand years for the advent of God's incarnate Son? the very central fact for which human history was to exist at all? Why the sacrifice of so many heathen nations before the Day-star of

Redemption dawned upon the race? Why must the whole antediluvian world be wasted and only Noah and his family preserved? Why must a few insignificant Jewish tribes monopolize all inspired history, all heavenly light, all divine providence—before whose miraculous march and preservation swarming empires went down to uncovenanted graves, almost like Egypt's vermin before the breath of the Almighty? Why, we ask, this terrific, oceanic waste of man, made in his Maker's image?

Turning to secular history, hardly less insoluble problems confront us. How slow humanity's march toward the ideals of civilization! Through what dark centuries has this world groaned and groped toward the light, before giving birth to the simplest conception of human rights and liberty!

And how little power has Christianity itself to-day over the very world into which God sent his Son! Take a map of our earth and glance over it. What mere points yet illumined by the truth as it is in Jesus! what vast, swarming regions yet black with error, superstition and cruelty! China with her overflowing millions scarce entered by the gospel; India with her population like the sands of the desert; unexplored Africa, the vast papal dominions, the Mahomedan empire, the benighted isles of the sea! O God, we feel like exclaiming, is thy promise to thy crucified

Son, that this earth shall be his inheritance? Why, then, this delay through the ages? to what purpose this fearful waste of souls, forever pressing up Christless to thy judgment bar?

Once more, if we turn from nature and the great fixed facts of history to contemplate more minutely moral and providential events, transpiring under the divine superintendency, our minds, I am sure, will be no less impressed with the wide application of our theme to-day. But now, right at the threshold of the great sphere of divine providence, a little explanatory light, for the first time, begins to glimmer along our pathway. In nature and in history are great stupendous facts which as yet lie under total eclipse to human intelligence. The mind thus far has struggled in vain for any clue to their solution. But in the kingdom of Providence the case is different. We speak, it is true, of "dark providences," "inscrutable dealings" of Jehovah with men. Still, I must think that every reverent, human intellect carries in its deepest consciousness an abiding impression that could men rise to the point of observation occupied by the Infinite Disposer of events, his divine ways, even to human apprehension, would at once appear consistent and wise.

Could we climb to that Omniscient and Eternal Outlook, and, far above the refracting atmospheres of earth,

compass all factors that enter into the infinite plan, instantly our caviling would be disarmed, and in speechless adoration we should fall before Him and confess that his ways were perfect. But, hampered by the senses and exalting as we do material over spiritual standards, often our unbelieving lips still raise that venal question, "To what purpose is this waste?"

Resuming, then, our line of illustration in the field of providence, look first, if you please, at any foremost nation on this globe, and note the events which, under God, have redounded most in the end to that nation's enduring prosperity. Have there been events of material success? Nay; in almost every instance the very opposite—convulsion, overthrow, terrific waste of temporary and material treasures, for the sake of benefits too priceless to be reckoned. Not a single great principle, I am now bold to say, moral or political, sits crowned to-day in the world's acceptance, that has not reached its coronation through bloodshed and revolution.

Timid, world-loving, commercial men have ever asked, "Why this waste?" But when a great idea, a great principle has seized a nation's conscience you may roll back the tides of the ocean, but you cannot prevent that nation's moral upheaval. In such an hour, commerce and finance go to the winds. When such crises come, thank

God, men still see no realities, but justice and heroism and honor and sacrifice. And all along the track of historic civilization, as one after another of the citadels of injustice and tyranny have tottered, look you, through what Red Seas of blood have the militant nations marched to their triumph! So, along every line of reform, illustrations would crowd upon us of the principle we unfold, viz., that the richest harvests of blessing and success ever yet garnered for our race have been the ripened fruit of seed sown, not in sunshine, but in tears and ignominy and scoffing and sacrifice.

For one moment, in passing, notice how the principle we contemplate runs through all those events we are wont to designate as disasters and calamities. But, rightly understood, I must think there is no such thing as disaster under the government of God. Is not he supreme? Can he be foiled through limited skill or power in adapting means to ends? True, at present, our finite vision cannot compass all the economics of his working, but if we have the eye of filial sagacity we can understand, even now, in *part*. How many of what are called fearful accidents, overwhelming misfortunes, are made immediately and conspicuously by the divine Hand to minister an almost infinitely wider profit to society! In our imperfect speech we call it "overruling" the event "for good." But in my

judgment it is not "overruling," or "underruling"—simply the event working out its own normal results, only through channels and on planes deeper down and higher up than our material philosophy can grasp. We underrate moral forces; God is ever exalting them. Misfortune happens to an individual, but in the way of warning and experience, how often the misfortune of one is the salvation of thousands! A ship strikes a sunken reef and goes down at sea, but a beacon light is reared, and for centuries after a million vessels, freighted with buoyant life, shun the rock on which the fated one perished. A city is laid in ashes, but in the light of that one tremendous conflagration, the architecture of Christendom is reconstructed. In a fearful railroad accident scores of lives are sacrificed, a thrill of horror goes through the land, but thereafter every switch, every signal from ocean to ocean, is more carefully tended, every bridge reinspected, rebolted and rebuttressed, ten thousand engineers are more lynx-eyed, millions of rolling palaces are more wisely fabricated. Who shall estimate, through scores of years, the world over, the preservative, precautionary effect of that one accident upon the great aggregate of human locomotive security? Of course I have time but to hint at this branch of my subject. But who will now undertake to say that a wonderful, compensatory principle of beneficent sacrifice does

not underlie the whole phenomena of so-called calamitous providences in our world?

Led by our text to turn our thoughts more directly to the sphere of religious consecration to the work and honor of Christ, how imperfectly, my brethren, do we often judge of Christian service in this world of ours! how apt to speak of this and that costly oblation or personal instrumentality as futile and wasted in the vineyard of the Lord! But Christ rebukes such dimness of vision as in his first disciples. He is ever showing us by his divine and providential benedictions that no sincere heart offering to him can be wasted. Uncalculating and sacrificial fidelity from the beginning has been the mightiest motor-force in his kingdom. Wise, judicious, mammon-loving men have ever deprecated such devotion as an unwise and extravagant expenditure of strength and health and fortune and life. But, mark you, the men each age has called its dreamers, fanatics and spiritual spendthrifts, in the next age have been the kingly names of history. God is teaching every generation the great truth that the wastes and failures of earth are forever fructifying into heaven's proudest victories. Whose are the brightest names to-day on the honor-roll of the Church—names now watchwords of power? In almost every instance in their own time, men of failure, large portions of whose lives, in

contemporary estimation, were wasted, exiled, martyred men, or men falling early, heartbroken under the strife,—but in the school of scorn and suffering learning the secret of eternal fame.

Calvin's matchless intellect, come down to later times, was born of exile. Luther's titanic strength to shake Germany with the Reformation was slowly acquired, you will recall, during wasted years within the walls of a papal monastery. John Knox, Scotland's dauntless reformer, was a sad and exiled wanderer in foreign climes, until past fifty years of age. To silence the preaching of John Bunyan, English prelates thrust him into a Bedford prison. For twelve years friends mourned his shining talents as lost. And yet, but for English persecution and Bedford jail, John Bunyan had never become a glorious dreamer, giving to the world his "Pilgrim's Progress," next to the English Bible, for three centuries, the most potent book in our language. We see not as the Master and he knows best how to use the gifts of his servants. A young man of shining qualities of mind and heart left an English university to give his splendid talents to the heathen. Admiring and ambitious friends remonstrated, but in vain. Fired with irrepressible love for the Saviour, he could not withhold the costliest offering he could bring. He went a missionary to India. A victim of overwork and a tropi-

cal climate, he laid down his life at thirty-two, and died without the knowledge, at his death, of a single heathen soul being converted to Christ through his labors. All the world exclaimed, What a waste! My friends, did Henry Martyn really waste his life? Oh, short-sighted philosophy of Christian disciples! By that one unhesitating, magnificent self-immolation Henry Martyn generated a power for Christian missions, which a hundred lives lengthened to threescore years and ten of ordinary service could not have produced. In a million Christian hearts to-day his name is a perpetual inspiration. On every heathen shore his memory is sainted. At his lonely station, a toiling, weary, disheartened missionary of the cross to-day but thinks as he toils of Henry Martyn, and plies with new zeal and courage his work for Christ.

Recall again those dying words of eloquent Dudley Tyng to his father: "Stand up for Jesus!" and tell me, if you can, what those words have done since they were spoken for God! Like a bugle blast from mountain peak to mountain peak, they have been caught up, until across a continent a whole generation of Christian workers have marched beneath them as a very battle-cry of victory! Was not Dudley Tyng mightier in his death than in his life? And there are those who speak of One, whose sacred name I now feel it almost irreverent to link with human

examples, whose advent to our world must ever stand alone in mysterious historic grandeur—the divinely begotten, the Crucified One. There are those who speak of the world's Saviour as though his redemptive power over the race was in his life and not in his death. No, my friends, a thousand times, no! Not for a brief, earthly ministry did God's Son leave his Father's throne! If that were all, what a tragedy indeed shadowed the noonday brow of Calvary!

But hear heaven's interpretation of that scene! "In the end of the world hath he appeared to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of himself!" And that, beloved, is the philosophy of the atonement. Standing now at length on this height of our argument and looking back all the way we have come, suffer me now to say, for one, I believe that light will yet dawn upon that great primal enigma of permitted evil in this fallen world of ours. I believe that those great, gigantic wastes in human history we have contemplated, stretching all through the past, will one day be radiant with a divine explanation. I believe the time will come when to human minds every truth of Scripture, every mysterious dispensation of the divine Hand will stand forth self-revealing and self-justifying in the meridian light of eternity. And that greatest of all enigmas, clouding futurity like a pall, overtopping every other Scrip-

tural truth with black and staggering mystery; that great definite, unmistakable revelation of God's Bible—the eternal perdition of the Christless, oh, why is this truth revealed to us? “O beneficent Father, to what purpose,” we cry, “the fearful, endless waste?” In vain our question cleaves the air and echoes back from the eternal silence. Shall we then give up our trust? Have we journeyed thus far victoriously all along the highway of the divine administration only to surrender our faith at the gateway of this last towering enigma? No, my friends, let us believe to the end. God is righteous, and through eternity he will be righteous still. In some way—we know it,—in some way will yet be revealed to his wondering and adoring children that a vast and beneficent sacrificial philosophy underlies even the final transcendent mystery of hell itself.

Let two or three brief remarks, in the way of application, conclude the subject. And first, we see how completely in our ordinary judgment we mistake the very central policy of the divine administration. In our common estimates we invert, precisely, the rule by which God chiefly works throughout his empire. We call that weakness which God calls strength. We call that futility and misapplication which he reckons the highest success. We designate those very phenomena as failures and wastes

which in God's economy are the most potent forces employed. Blindly and sensuously we think that only those causes can be efficient which, without friction, run along in the visible grooves of established method and order and prosperity; and that all interruptions of this order are a loss of power. But, my friends, God works by interruption. The mightiest in his universe are ever achieved by interruption. When he would signally bless men and produce a far-reaching and stupendous effect of beneficence, through all history he has done it by interposition, by cross-purposes, by transcending, ordinary methods; in one word, by the principle of sacrifice.

Again a personal lesson, my fellow believers, of priceless moment and comfort, is brought to you and to me to-day. It is this: no such thing is possible as misfortune or disaster to a Christ and Spirit-sealed child of God. No such thing is possible as wasted talent to one, all of whose talents have been laid at the feet of Christ. And yet how slow of heart to believe! How often do we murmur at life's allotments and think in our case, at least, that the post of earthly duty has been misjudged! How prone to harbor the repining thought that were it not for this or that encumbrance or infirmity or "thorn in the flesh," our usefulness in the Master's vineyard would be greatly increased! Looking back over the past, how apt we are to say to our-

selves, "Were it not for that mistake, that decision, that one irretrievable failure, that black hiatus of years in my life's early history! or, were it not for this sickness, these cares, this crushing life-burden I now carry, I might do valiant and effective work for my Lord!" O Christian disciples, you who think and talk thus, how sadly and totally do you misapprehend even yet the true source of your spiritual power! Why are we so blind? Why will we never learn from God's Word, from providence, from the great book of history itself, that the way to the crown is ever by the cross! that the path to glory lies evermore through the blood-tracked path of sacrifice! and that from the wastes of the world, not the successes of earth, are now waving heaven's golden harvests!

Finally, beloved friends, fain would I leave indelibly on every heart, as I close, the crowning lesson of my subject—be not penurious with Christ! When the early disciples saw the costly oblation of the loving Mary poured out at Jesus' feet, they meanly asked, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" Oh, detestable parsimony! Oh, weak-minded faith of the disciples! Oh, how could those who had walked so long with the Master, understand as yet so faintly the finance of heaven? Brethren, while rebuking their unbelief, shall we imitate their avarice? Oh, will not we be generous and

uncalculating with Him who bought us with his own blood? Like Mary, let us bring our costliest gifts, our stored alabaster-boxes of priceless treasure and break them at his pierced feet! Have you wealth, my brother, oh, lavish it upon Christ! Above every other mistake, let us shun the mistake of penny-wise and pound-foolish in our religious liberality. Is there any tender, generous, glorious sacrifice we can make to-day for our Saviour? Then let us not linger, for not he, but we are now hastening to our burial. But every sacrifice, remember, will be a memorial to our eternal praise; every cross borne for him, a scepter there of endless dominion; every tear a diamond in the imperishable crown; and when at last at his feet on the heavenly plains, when the last enemy is destroyed, the Son shall yield his mediatorial reign to the Father, then from the lips of Jesus himself shall we learn the great and wondrous depths of that divine "Philosophy of Sacrifice" we have now feebly attempted to penetrate. Then shall we see with undimmed and seraphic vision how it is that all the wastes and evils and sufferings of this mortal life have only culminated at last in the perfect joy of heaven.

WORKING IN THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL

"Son, go work to-day in my vineyard."—Matt. 21: 28.

WORKING IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts."

—1 Cor. 12: 28-31.

In this paragraph I have now read from the First Epistle to the Corinthians, is incidentally disclosed the fact, that upon the early primitive Church was bestowed by the Divine Spirit certain miraculous powers, superinduced probably upon the natural gifts of individuals, which powers in their miraculous character have now passed away, while the diversity of natural gifts remains, as marked and wide as in the apostolic days. Men no longer supernaturally speak in foreign languages. They no longer have power miraculously to heal the sick or to interpret an unknown tongue. But just as much now as in the time of Paul there are different offices in the Christian Church, different duties to be performed, different gifts to be employed, and a personal account to be rendered by all to the Church's divine Head. It is true now that "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit," and "as the body

is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body," so also is it with the Church of Christ. There are many members baptized by the same Spirit into one Body, the Lord.

Uniting, then, these two passages of Scripture, the one from the mouth of Christ, and the other from the writings of Paul, I wish to ask attention at this time to two simple propositions, which, it seems to me, need not much more than a plain statement before any Christian church of this day, to be *self-enforcing* and *self-convincing*.

First, it is one of the plainest truths taught in the whole Bible, that it is the duty of every professing follower of Christ, to *work*. If there is any point about which it would seem almost a waste of words to enter upon serious argument to establish, it is certainly the fact that it is the duty of every one who recognizes Jesus Christ as Lord and Master to work for his glory and honor.

My second proposition, also plainly taught, I think, by the Scriptures, is this: that the regenerative Christian work required to be done in this world for Christ is to be devolved *not* upon a few isolated Christians, but is the work of the church *itself*, as an organized body of believers.

That the duty of personal service and labor is the first step and the foundation of Christian discipleship certainly need not detain us but a moment at this time. Personal

"service" lies at the bottom of gospel teaching. It is the radical idea in the word "religion." There really can be no greater solecism in language than the phrase an "idle Christian."

Christ's words in nearly every case, to those who sought his discipleship, were, "Follow me." Forsake your ease, your friends, your self-indulgence; take up the cross and follow me. And by his parables, his similes, his illustrations through every variety of metaphor, he is continually enforcing the great key-thought of service and personal dedication to himself. He tells his disciples that by their *fruits* they are to judge men's hearts. He points them to the "barren fig-tree" as a vivid emblem of an irreligious life, and by the figure of a "vineyard" and its laborers, a master and his stewards, a lord and his servants, he inculcates the same lesson of consecration. In that parable of the "talents," more successfully and graphically, perhaps, than in any other passage, does he bring definitely into view the great law of universal accountability and the guilt of an idle, fruitless life. "Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee, etc."—*Matt.* 25: 24.

But without further remark, I shall now assume that all who hear me to-day, connected with the visible Church of Christ, are ready to admit, theoretically at least, that *service*

is one of the most radical ideas of Christian teaching. But while Christians, most Christians at this day, connected by profession with the church, are willing to acknowledge, abstractly, the claims of the Saviour upon them for personal labor, yet practically seem in strange ignorance of what are the Scriptural functions of the church as an undivided body; what is the relation of fellow members to each other? and of all to Christ? Many persons seem not to consider that there is any more organic unity to a Christian church than there is to a company of travelers, who by chance meet on any day at the same station from North, South, East and West and accidentally jump aboard the same train to ride to a neighboring city. Many seem to think the church is a kind of boat, where all who take passage are only required and expected to sit with decorous quietness while the minister, perhaps aided by his deacons, rows them to heaven. Now this was not, I think, the apostolic idea.

The Bible uses no imagery indicating a more vital and consolidating union than that which subsists between believers united in the same church. The apostle says to the church at Corinth, "Ye are the body of Christ." There should therefore be no schism in the body. "God hath tempered the body together . . . that the members should have the same care one for another." Just as in the

human body the same sensitive, all-uniting life-principle runs through the frame, linking limbs, organs and faculties in mysterious loyalty to one administrating human soul, so that the whole brotherhood of members suffer or rejoice together, so in the church-body of Christ there is an organic spiritual unity—not a chance companionship of professing believers.

And now the apostle teaches that this peculiar unity of the Christian Church is organic, not for mere outward grace and beauty, but to make the Church an instrument of the highest possible spiritual efficiency in the great vineyard of Christ. It is beautifying indeed to look upon an army, filed in long and gleaming lines, with burnished weapons and waving plumes, upon a parade ground; to watch their perfect movements, their swift, exact evolutions at the word of command. But all these rapid and combined movements, beautiful as they are, the fruit of months of patient drill, we should hardly think worth their cost, did we not know that in military matters, union means simply efficiency, and that these banded lines and unwavering columns shall at length carry confusion and consternation into the face of the enemy. So with the Church. The Church's union is designed simply to be the Church's strength. And as in war the most skilfully combined forces carry the day, so the Church was meant to be an

organically combined, spiritual body, for the most speedy and perfect subjugation of this sinful world. The Church's *union*, then, is the Church's *strength*, and never was an instrument constructed in which every part was so meant to help every other part and the whole, without friction—work skilfully and jointly together for the one end to be accomplished. The Church was designed by Christ, so far as sanctified human nature can serve such an end, to become a perfect working instrumentality for the ultimate regeneration of our race. And in this work every part is indispensable. The Church is a complex instrument. It is a combined work, to be portioned where responsibility cannot be shifted from one to another. Every member has his function, his gifts, his apportioned duty, for which he must render personal account. In this united labor, “the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary,”—just as necessary and indispensable as the more ostentatious members. And if any member of Christ's body shirks his appointed duty, leaving it undone because he claims that his position is inferior or his talents more limited, he assumes a terrible responsibility. Let him remember the doom of him who cowardly hid his one talent. “Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.”

I think, then, it will now be admitted, not only that every Christian owes a personal dedication to Christ, but that the Church was designed in superhuman wisdom by Christ, to be an organized institution for united and co-operating Christian labor in the field of the world, in which Christians are to hold a vital, supplemental relation to each other, having a joint work to perform, varied gifts with which to perform it, and a common responsibility to meet.

If I am right in this opinion, I wish now to base upon it a few remarks.

And *first*, if this theory of the Church I have propounded is the Scriptural one, it was never designed by Christ that a small fractional number in every church of his should *do all the work* while the great mass of members remain idle, useless and irresponsible. If the church has, as the apostle taught, a united, organic and sympathetic religious life, then a few of the functions will not work with proper health, if the body mainly is suffering spiritual paralysis. So far as we can glean from the New Testament writings, I think it beyond question that the members of the apostolic churches, much more than we of modern times, carried into successful practice the idea of varied and widely cooperating Christian labor, and in organized cooperation looked for success. They recognized the fact, that Christ when he ascended instituted a system of work-

ing complex forces in the Church he left behind him; that he gave apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers for the edifying of the body of Christ, till all should "come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man." The early Church by the exercise of its varied personal gifts, by co-ordinate systematic methods, through multiform channels of labor, by helps, governments, diversities of tongues, sought to do the great work of Christian edification imposed upon it by the Master. This work was not left for one class of men to do. Labor was wisely distributed, and thus the principle of combination, corporate effort, associated labor became a lever of tremendous power in the Church—just as it always is in any secular undertaking. Business men of sagacious enterprise understand this; politicians understand it; military leaders base all their operations upon it. Why, then, should not the "children of light" be as wise in their generation as the children of this world? It is as ruinous in practical working as it is unscriptural in doctrine, for the Church in our day to ignore, as I think it is tempted to do to a fatal extent, the great principle of corporate effort, while it devolves the labor of Christian edification almost entirely upon the so called "ordained ministry" of the Church. I do not believe, my friends, that there is any *one* body of men in

the church, I care not how roundly educated, how richly crowned with intellectual power, how thoroughly versed in heart piety, that alone is adequate to the great work. The brain or heart in the human system could no more act effectively without assistance from the other functions and organs of the body, than a minister, however endowed, can work to purpose without the help of his church.

The subject would now properly open in various directions and might suggest several spheres in which the church ought to exert a corporate influence for Christ. I might speak of the united social work devolved upon the church in visitation and the like. I might speak upon the topic of lay-evangelization—a subject which I think deserves a profounder attention than it has yet received. I might refer to missionary organization and the like, but my theme to-day, I think, leads more directly to a consideration of the church as a self-edifying body containing in itself functions of self-nutriments and fitted through all its parts to become a Christian instrumentality in the local community where Christ has placed it. And I do not believe that in any age of the Church has God ever opened up to the eyes of his people, lying more in the very pathway of providence, a sphere of more momentous duty, than he has by developing in these modern times the great system and institution of the Sunday-school. The hand of

God is in its rise and his signal blessing has been upon its progress; and yet I believe, with all the wonderful advance which has been made, especially in our large cities within the last ten years, the whole system of Sunday-schools is yet in its infancy as a potential power in the Church.

A system can hardly be conceived, if its ideal should be carried out, more perfectly adapted to collect and condense into one focus of influence all the varied gifts, all the combined knowledge, all the complex experience, all the latent zeal, piety and power of a professing Christian church.

You will not suspect me of any desire to undervalue the office of the Christian ministry. I believe it instituted of Christ and the noblest post of work to which God calls a mortal man. And yet I believe a more ruinous error cannot take root in the mind than the belief that the preacher of the gospel is to do the chief work of Christian edification in any church of Jesus Christ. If any church expects to come to the unity of the faith and to the fulness of the stature of Christ through the influence of the ministry alone, I think it will in the end reap the bitter fruit of its error.

I might mention three things which render such a result, from the ministry alone, impossible. In the first place, no one man has the intellectual endowment for such a mighty

task. There is not more variety in human faces and human bodies than there is in human minds. The minds of men all differ, and it would be a serious misfortune, in my opinion, for any church to become the exact counterpart and mirror of any one minister's mind. God confers different gifts. One man is supereminently speculative, doctrinal in his lines of thought. Another man's mind takes a practical view of every subject. One is exegetical, illustrative and synthetic in his methods of preaching; another is abstract and analytical; one man has the "gift of tongues," another of teaching, another of administration; on another the executive faculty is conferred in large measure; but the gifts of all men differ.

Again, no *one* man has the complete Christian experience needed for the perfect edification of an entire Christian church. Piety, even when genuine and deep, has all varieties of type. The sunlight playing over the face of a landscape does not produce greater extremes and diversities of color than does God's grace shining upon different human temperaments, producing different phases of religious experience. There is indeed a radical sameness at the bottom in Christian character, but there is marked diversity with the same Spirit; and no one weak heart of man can reflect, full-orbed, all the grace and glory of Christ's sanctifying religion.

But a *third* inability which every public preacher sorely feels in himself, to do the whole work of religious evangelization required by his people, lies in the impossibility of securing that intimate, extended and protracted personal contact with all, needed for such a result. Here a division of Christian labor is absolutely indispensable. Had a minister all the tact, discernment and knowledge of human nature needed for such a varied work, no one man is gifted with powers of ubiquity. And just as in early times, God provided for the limitations of individual power and for the exigencies of his Church by the conferment of miraculous and widely multiplied offices so now, in his providence, he has raised up the Sunday-school to aid and to supplement the Christian pulpit, and to become a medium through which the Church shall be able to preserve its complex and organic spiritual power.

But there are objections to the Sunday-school. It requires, say some, hard work. Of course it does. Is there any Christian who thinks he can get to heaven without working at all for Christ? If there is he will find that the Bible will give him little solace in his undertaking.

But, it is said again, "teaching" is a peculiar gift. I acknowledge it a rare and peculiar gift, and for that very reason some who hear me to-day should ask themselves prayerfully the question if they are not burying in a nap-

kin a rare talent for which the Master is now calling. By no means is it education, eloquence or learning, that invariably confers the gift of teaching. It is a singular, priceless talent resting upon some minds like a crown. Indeed, a man may have the gift of prophecy; he may speak, if you please, with the tongues of men and of angels and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and yet have no power skilfully to teach. There are a score of persons in this congregation, male and female, at whose feet, for my own part, I would sit with the most reverent humility in this shining power God has given them, magnetically and soulfully to impart instruction to other minds. Are such who hear me prepared to give an account of their stewardship?

But say some, "I would be willing to teach in the Sunday-school, but I am no theologian; I am not educated; I am not able to explain satisfactorily the mysteries of the Bible." All I can say to you is, that in this respect you are just where your minister is. When we come to the great mysteries of religion and God's infinite counsels, learned or unlearned, we are on a level. We stand together in our littleness at the base of giant mountains whose mighty peaks are hidden in the sky. In these matters we must wait the light of eternity. Our wisdom now is to know our ignorance. The spirit with which to ap-

proach God's Word is not the spirit of a philosopher, but the spirit of a little child,—a humble, believing and receptive disposition—and with the prayer of young Samuel in the heart, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." With ordinary intelligence, with the helps to Biblical study, accessible to all with a little effort, and with a heart loving God's truth and the Saviour who died for our ransom, very few can plead total intellectual disqualification for some positions of work in the great vineyard of the Sunday-school. If any do, however, feel absolute disqualification, the very best way, let me say to them, to equip their own minds with priceless knowledge, is to set about the attempt patiently and instruct others.

And now this is the place, I think, for me to announce what I consider the distinctive advantage of the Sunday-school system of instruction. It affords opportunity for mutual study and investigation of God's Word. The pulpit does not admit of this. Every one knows how much more vividly any mind grasps a subject when that mind is an active participant in the investigation, and not a mere passive listener to the thoughts of others. In mutual study, in discussion, mind sharpens mind, light flashes upon a point from a score of different minds, and therefore from a score of different angles; objections and suggestions are evoked and considered with a breadth and thoroughness

which no one mind possibly could attain. The greatest thinkers the world has seen have ever acknowledged the value of this collision of intellects. Locke, the great English metaphysician, asserted that nine things out of ten of all that he knew he had learned in conversation with others. And an English statesman said that he never conversed with a man so illiterate and uneducated that he was not able to carry away from the interview some new idea. Now this, all can see, is the great advantage gained in the mutual study of the Bible. No two minds look at a subject in just the same way. No two heart experiences are precisely the same. There is no individual in this congregation, I may believe not one, but has it in his or her ability to add something either of head or heart which no other person can add to the common stock of mental and Scriptural knowledge which it is the object of the Sunday-school to evoke.

My hearer, then, if you recognize Christian obligation, let me ask, Have you weighed this matter as you ought? If, then, you are not willing to call yourselves distinctively "teachers," become mutual teachers; form classes of joint study of God's blessed Book, where each shall bring his quotum, however humble, of knowledge, suggestion or experience to bless the hearts and quicken the faith of others. Indeed, I am firmly convinced that an ideal Sunday-school

is one coextensive with the worshipping congregation; that it should embrace without exception old and young—all who visit for worship the house of God on the Sabbath day. It may be, brethren, the hour is not yet ripe for such a consummation in our midst, but toward it let us labor. One thing I venture to say to all: if any of this congregation who have stood aloof will enter with hearty cooperation into this great work, they will assure me hereafter that of all the privileges of holy time, there is none which for religious profit, pleasure and usefulness they set a higher value upon, than the season socially employed in the study of God's Word in the Sunday-school.

But I must pause at the very threshold of my subject. A single discourse permits us only to come up to the edge of the field, look out upon the waving grain, white for the harvest, and hear Christ's call to us all to enter in and labor. Many arguments at this time for such labor I must leave unspoken. I desired to speak at least for a moment of the position—a position which it seems to me angels might envy—which a Sunday-school teacher occupies toward his pupils for their immediate conversion to Christ. Oh, if any Christian heart yearns to work for Jesus, what a field is here! To gather about you souls in such intimate, tender relationship, and feed them with the "bread of life!" to know your pupils intimately, to feel a

responsibility for them, to be able to carry them in the arms of faith, individually, in wrestling prayer to the feet of the loving Saviour! Oh, the social, moulding power over mind and destiny which only the mathematics of eternity shall be able fully to estimate! Christians of this church, will you then heed to-day the Saviour's voice, "Go work in my vineyard"? The vineyard is right around you; the work is fully in your sight; the harvest is great, but, alas, the laborers are few! Within a stone's throw of this building where we speak there are hundreds who ought to be connected with the Sabbath-school, who now are desecrating the Day of God, perishing for lack of knowledge and proper Biblical instruction, and who, I believe, with simply a united and earnest fidelity on the part of those who wear the badge of Christian discipleship, might be gathered into the fold of the Sunday-school. Christian professor, will you look out into this field? Will you ask yourself the question, "Does Christ address *me* in his providence, when he says, 'Go work to-day in my vineyard'?" Young men of this church and congregation, young women, will you take hold of this work? You of middle life, are you too old to lend a hand to this glorious crusade against the kingdom of darkness? Are any here too aged to profit by this mutual study of God's Word? Will you, then, lend your influence, old and young, by your per-

sonal presence in the Sunday-school as teachers, as pupils, or as students together of the oracles of God in the attempt to raise the Sunday-school connected with this church to the position of glorious and organized usefulness which it ought to occupy in the house of God? Will you come? It is a great work and all are needed for its performance. As you love, then, Christian friends, the cause which the Redeemer loved, and desire to see his Church upon earth built up after the similitude of a glorious, spiritual temple, bring out your tools one and all, you who have laid them aside to rust, and engage in this magnificent undertaking.

Each one of you may lay a "living stone," or shape a human character, which will shine to the Saviour's praise through eternity. Out of sight comparatively, obscure and unblazoned, your work may now be, but in the Revealing Day you shall sit and your fidelity shall be heralded through the empire of heaven! Come forth, then, one and all, and help build the temple of Christ, though no sound of hammer or axe rings through its mystic walls. Silently and steadily the glorious work progresses and blessed are they who have part in the rearing. And when He who laid the foundation, who is himself the Corner Stone, shall at length bring the edifice to completion; when at length the head-stone of the mighty structure shall be brought

forth, while heaven's all ransomed ones shout, "Grace, grace, unto it!" then they who have been faithful shall be pillars in the temple. Then they who have been wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they who have turned many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

ENTERING INTO REST

"For we which have believed do enter into rest." — Heb. 4: 3.

ENTERING INTO REST

Some of the most precious Bible truths can be unlocked to our apprehension only with the key of our every-day experience. The Bible indeed is full of images, borrowing all their vividness and power from this source. For example, had we no personal experience of the sensations of hunger or thirst, what appropriate meaning could we attach to the beautiful language of inspiration, symbolizing Christ to our spiritual need as the "bread of life" for hungry souls, and the well of living waters, of which if a man drink he shall never thirst? Or what true appreciation could any Bible reader have of that sweet, oft-recurring Scripture emblem, rest, who had never known toil, fatigue, mental disquiet and earthly vicissitude, or had never worn the galling yoke of fear, anxiety and sin?

In this fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that glorious rest-chapter of the Bible, the apostle, you observe, is addressing the posterity of those who came out of Egypt under Moses; and the Hebrews to whom Paul writes, like their ancestors, were an isolated and nomadic people. In whatever country their lot was cast, they were regarded ever as foreigners and strangers, having no abiding city.

And to me there seems a divine intention in this homeless history of the Hebrew nation. God's chosen people, and the special organ of his written revelation to mankind, were homeless, that he might impress vividly upon their hearts and imaginations, by the power of contrast, the glorious stability and the unchanging repose of the heavenly future.

What a rich and soul-satisfying fulness of meaning, then, must have been contained in this word, *rest*, to a Hebrew mind! For nearly three centuries as a nation ground down under Egyptian taskmasters; by divine miracle escaping; for forty years wandering through pathless deserts, marching and countermarching; distracted with inward revolt and foreign attack, until at last from Pisgah's summit the promised Canaan burst upon their vision—what a history, we should say, to burn ineffaceably into the national Hebrew mind the full meaning of *rest*! and through the earthly symbol the blessedness of the heavenly Canaan beyond!

But, my friends, who of mortal parentage and of earthly tuition has gained no insight through personal experience into the hidden meaning and incomparable consolation of this Scriptural emblem? "Thou hast made us for thyself, O God," said St. Augustine, forty generations ago, out of the depths of his own battle-worn spirit, "and our souls are

restless till they find rest in thee." In heaven's heraldry we are sons and heirs of immortality and only immortality can fully satisfy us. But by faith we may anticipate our future inheritance. Mark now the peculiar expression in my text: "For we which have believed," says the apostle, "*do enter into rest.*" Not *shall*, but *do*. The present tense. Paul's great and joyous affirmation now is, that Christians inherit a present salvation as well as a future, at once receiving instalment and foretaste of heaven, their final reward. If, my friends, we have truly believed in Christ and have put our souls into his gracious keeping, then do we enter into *rest*.

Let me invite you, then, at this time, to note in a few particulars how faith gives to the Christian present *rest*.

First, it gives rest to his reason. By faith, the Christian gains intellectual repose. It is a true saying, I think, that "he who has never doubted, has never half believed." For an intellect of any capacity to be born into a world like this, and confront, one after another, the stupendous problems of existence, and yet never to have known the tortures of doubt, is something to me, I confess to you, incomprehensible. This world in which we live is full of mysteries and no theologian, worthy the name, for an instant can deny it. How, then, you ask me, does faith rid the human reason of mystery? In other words, how does

the Bible take mystery out of the world? I answer you candidly, it does not take mystery out of the world or out of the universe. Now many persons make a singular mistake, it seems to me, as to what the Bible really undertakes and professes to do for the human intellect.

Irreligious and skeptical men ask me, How do you meet this objection and that? How do you settle this and that problem in science? How do you reconcile this and that enigma in history? How do you explain "election"? How do you interpret the flood? What do you do with infants and the ungospelized heathen? How do you reconcile it that only a few are finally to be saved? etc. Now let me say, with all emphasis, that the Bible, in my judgment, undertakes to solve for mankind not a single scientific, historic or metaphysical difficulty, *for the sake* of solving that difficulty. Christ in all his ministry never opened his mouth to explode a single objection brought against his religion in the way of science or philosophy. There are a thousand mysteries to which the Bible makes no allusion whatever and almost countless others to which it only incidentally refers, but without the slightest attempt at solution.

My friends, the Bible was sent from God to men to teach men God's way of human salvation. Man is a lost and wretched sinner. The Bible is God's lighthouse to save him. But does a lighthouse undertake to illumine the

whole interminable line of seacoast on a dark night? It illumines only the mariner's pathway into the harbor, and that is enough for all his need. On every side of him, it may be, are piled walls of Cimmerian darkness. Above, around, beneath, dangers threaten him; but in front and just right where he needs it, comes a stream of guiding light over the waves, and beyond is the restful, welcoming harbor.

Now what does God's Word do for my intellect as a sinner? I am in a stormy sea at night, my reckoning is lost, my rigging torn, my masts strained, my ship sinking. As I look around there is no hope. On my right, peering through the black clouds, are the long, jutting reefs of the Old Testament mysteries; on my *left*, the roar of God's sovereignty and the unfathomable counsels of his providence. In the distance I dimly discern the divine Justice, like a frowning cliff rising up to destroy me; and lashed by furious waves I hear afar the rocks of endless death. What can I do? I am palsied with despair. But now, turning a headland, suddenly shoots out over the turbulent sea, right in my path, the gleam of a friendly light! A thousand suns could not be more welcome. Noonday is born of midnight, and life of death, and in my joy I shout, "Safe! safe! safe! for yonder is the harbor!" I forget the mysteries about me. Above the tempest's blast I hear

now only a calm, sweet voice, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." Yonder is the cross! Yonder a shining form is walking on the sea! I catch an outbursting chorus from the skies, wafted to my ears through the scattering gloom, "Grace, grace, grace for the chief of sinners!" I resolve I will be tortured with doubts no longer. By belief, I enter into rest. And now trusting all to Jesus, my omnipotent Helper, I hear comforting words, "Thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." For we which have believed *do* enter into rest.

But I remark, again, we which have believed, enter into present spiritual rest by virtue of Christ presented to our souls as a perpetual and abiding Helper and Friend.

You may in past experience have felt the pardoning love of Jesus, and can now go back in memory to that never-to-be-forgotten hour, when as your soul lay burdened before the cross the suffering Saviour first smiled upon you and thrilled your being with a new and ineffable peace; you remember well that transition from darkness to light, from despair to hope. Your sin-bruised, Satan-buffed heart then first knew the meaning of rest. But, dear friends, not only at the day-dawn of our conversion, not only at the birth-hour of our immortal hope, is Christ most precious to the soul.

"If introduced by him our race we have begun!"

more and more to the end shall we need his blessed sacrificial mediation. It is not enough, it is not enough that *once* we have known the peace of pardon. These erring, fallen, guilt-stained souls must know continually his cleansing power until presented at last faultless before his throne.

As the Crucified then spoke peace at the first to our despairing hearts, so each day of the pilgrimage, at morning, night and hourly, must we roll off the burden of repeated sin at his sacred feet. Oh, how sad, my brethren, would be our condition still had we only a dead Christ, had we no death-conquering, risen Lord, no sympathizing, compassionate Elder Brother still saying to us, I am with you to the end; to whom we can go carrying each day's burdens and sorrows and temptations, and find restful forgiveness at his cross! And thus is presented to our faith to-day, fellow believers, not only a *once* crucified Redeemer, but a present, human and ever-living Friend and Intercessor in the skies.

Once more, I remark, by faith the Christian enters into rest as the object and the subject of God's special providential care. For me, my friends, I believe firmly in a special providence. I accept heartily the assurance of God's Word that, "all things work together for good to them that love God." I must believe that He who notes

the sparrow's fall, who numbers the very hairs of our heads, who clothes the fields with their wondrous beauty, cannot be indifferent to the minutest interests that concern his believing child. No earthly history is free from turbulence. The most smoothly flowing current of human life, heaven so ordained, has its breakers, its storms, at times its whirlpools, when the soul can only lie passive and helpless in the hand of superintending Power. There are storms, my friends, in every mortal experience, through which no human skill can pilot us, and when only by faith in an omnipotent Love we can find repose in the tempest.

It was my fortune once to experience a most stormy ocean passage. For nine days our frail bark breasted a succession of gales. Sick, wearied, sleepless on a dark night I lay when the storm was at its height. The tempest howled around us like a thousand demons. Our ship strained and plunged through the billows; waves rolled over us, and occasionally, a heavy sea striking the ship's side from stem to stern, through every timber she would stagger and tremble, like an ox struck with an axe. The heavy machinery of the engine played ceaselessly and wearily, groaning and creaking with its unwonted labor. A single breakage of screw or rivet or piston would have left us at the mercy of the storm. A moment's inattention of the man at the wheel, or failure to meet each wave at its exact

angle, would have thrown us into a trough of the sea, instantly to founder. As thus at dead of night I lay, in a momentary lull of the storm could be heard on deck the clear voice of the watchman, at midships, ringing out over the desolate sea, upon the midnight air, above the tempest's roar, "All's well." The man at the forecastle echoed the signal, and the man at the wheel caught up the cry "All's well." As in those helpless hours I listened, I thought if confidence in human skill, and in unsleeping human vigilance, could thus cradle the mind in repose amid ocean billows, what should be the serenity of that Christian heart which, by faith in that unslumbering Goodness, can tranquilly commit every interest for time and for eternity to a loving heavenly Father's care.

What did it matter if God's children were tempest-tossed on life's sea? What did it matter if called to buffet adversity, misfortune and suffering? Could he not say "My Father is at the helm! I shall outride the storm; no mortal evil can engulf me! No sorrow lower than the stars can but waft me the swifter into the haven of eternal victory." "All is well! All is well!" "For we which have believed do enter into rest."

As I have said then, friends, storms are before us all. Heaven so decreed, but He who is almighty to save is our covert from the tempest. "Thou hast made us for thyself,

and our souls are restless, until they rest in thee." Not until the old heavens and the old earth have passed away can it be written, "There is no more sea." Yet God's true children, it must now be confessed, are sometimes Satan-tempted to escape the storm, to hide away from the inevitable blasts of life in some mere carnal refuge. But a merciful God decrees that no rest shall be abiding until we stand on the other shore; that no life-voyage shall be stormless until we cast anchor beyond Jordan's flood.

God's methods of earthly discipline are various. Sometimes a true child of his is seemingly permitted almost to consummate some scheme of mere earthly ambition without check or disappointment, when suddenly comes the blow; the fond world-dream is shattered. Even while the waves are still and the sky clear sometimes comes the unexpected flash and the prostrating bolt, and the heart lies stunned and bleeding under the rod of God. "The world will never look again," said a bereaved Christian mother, "as before little Minnie died." Ah, no, and that is why, stricken one, the Paradise has been death-shadowed. But if the world's sun has set, through the darkness a new star shall gleam evermore to that watching mother's eye, angel voices now catch her listening ear, and the Upper Home, oh, how much brighter since that little vacant chair by her side.

Sometimes God makes a Christian restless by giving him a perpetual burden to carry through life; some stinging heart-sorrow, some thorn in the flesh making each step an anguish, some social mesalliance, or an unfortunate temperament, where self-victory is the price of eternal vigilance; some anxiety inseparable from business, some ceaseless, unintermitting, prostrating labor, some infirmity of bodily health. A Christian pilgrim of three score years said to me, "For fifteen years I have felt like one climbing a steep hill, with a heavy burden on his shoulders, aching, aching to lay it down." But though the thorn be not removed, though the cup God appointed pass not from our lips, sustaining grace will be sufficient. By faith we can enter into rest. Fellow heirs of the future, are we treading to-day this Beulah of trust which can antedate heaven? Are we at all times able to say, whether our pilgrim feet press the mountain-top or descend into the dark valley, "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me"? Can we with filial hearts look up out of every experience and say, "Abba, Father"? Storms will come; we must suffer if we would reign; but by faith we can have rest even now—not the rest that knows no trial, not the rest of sinless joy; *that* belongs to the glorified hereafter; but *here*, God helping, we can enter into the rest of trust, of hope, of faith, of patience.

Our rest now, it is true, is only as the lull in the conflict,

the awful pause where embattled armies stand face to face, but soon we shall lay down our armor in the Master's presence. And then, dear friends, will not the final bivouac be all the sweeter for the march and the strife? Will not earth's tumults be evermore a background for heaven's joys? "What are these," asked the entranced Revelator, "what are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" Yes, the storm here, the rainbow there; the cross here, the crown there. Here the din of battle, there the shoutings of immortal victory. "For we which have believed do enter into rest." But, thanks be to God, a rest, glorious as it now is, which is but a faint fore-gleam and antepart of that rest, seraphic, eternal and now inconceivable, "which remaineth to the people of God."

THE WORD OF LIFE

"Holding forth the word of life."—Phil. 2: 16.

THE WORD OF LIFE

By the phrase "word of life," the apostle plainly refers to the Holy Scriptures, or more specifically, perhaps, to the gospel of redemption through Christ. Various terms are used by the inspired writers to designate the Bible. It is called God's law, his testimony, his commandment, statutes, oracles and the like. The New Testament writers frequently refer to the Scriptures, under the terms, "word of truth," the "word of prophecy"; and here Paul uses the expressive phrase, the "word of life," or the life-giving word. The great fact is thus implied, as it is constantly assumed throughout the Scriptures, that God published his written truth for the simple purpose of generating spiritual life in the hearts of men. The Bible, then, is an instrument to accomplish a purpose. And just as any instrument is valuable only as it serves its end, so with all reverence we may say that the Bible is valueless to mankind only as fitted in some degree to transmute its recorded truth into actual and practical human life.

The Bible mission, therefore, to our world and without which it would be useless to the world, is to take the abstract and unvitalized doctrines it contains, glorious in

themselves, if you please, but lying as yet inert and inanimate on its written pages, and carrying them into human hearts, there plant them in sentient, thinking, suffering, enjoying, accountable human souls. When this incorruptible seed of the Word, thus planted in the soul, has at length sprung up into the glorious fruitage of Christian character and experience and testimony, then the Bible has done its appointed work. Christ's gospel, then, must first reproduce and mirror its divine teachings in actual human living in our world.

The world's skepticism is to be met and finally conquered, not by impregnable creeds, not by learned defences of faith, not by scholarly lectureships or eloquent pulpits, but first and foremost, in my judgment, by the very spirit of the incarnate Lord outshining from his own instituted and professing Church. This proof of Christianity the world will accept, and ultimately it will accept no other.

A learned botanist may perhaps detect a beauty and a latent power in the structure of a flower-seed or a kernel of wheat, but common minds will not admire them until they have bloomed in the many colored flowers, or waved in the yellow harvest. An engraver etching his work on steel, with his practised eye may see a beauty in his picture before transferred to copy; not so, the inartistic multitude. A skilful printer can read the thoughts of an author, as

they lie before him in the leaden type, but the mass of men must wait until the printed pages are scattered broadcast over the land. Now, not unlike this, I apprehend, is it with treatises and compendiums in favor of religion. A few disciplined, professional minds can perhaps comprehend the force of an abstract argument, conducted in defence of the Christian faith; but the great majority in every community will ever be dependent on the reproduction of this divine logic in the actual every-day living of Christian men and women. Hence Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Ye are our epistle . . . known and read of all men." This is the world-method of judging in other matters; why not in religion?

Your neighbor invents an instrument or machine for which he claims a certain efficiency; is it unfair that you ask him to put his machine on trial? A man claims to be an artist. How does the world decide? Is there any other way to judge him than by his works? Sir Christopher Wren is pronounced a great architect. Did he make his fame on paper? You enter St. Paul's cathedral in London, built by the genius of this man. As you stand beneath the dome in the center of that magnificent structure, nave and transept stretching before you like a very wilderness of arched and sculptured beauty, graved on the marble floor, above the spot where rest the ashes of the great builder,

are these words: "*Si monumentum requiris, circumspice!*" "If you seek his monument, look around you." That mighty fabric is his only monument, and to all generations it will declare beyond cavil what was the genius of Christopher Wren.

A physician may discourse to you on the laws of the human body, the nature of disease, the composition of the blood, the structure of the nervous system; and he assures you that medicine has this and that chemical potency, and ought to expel disease in accordance with this and that beautiful, preestablished harmony or disharmony in the human system. His conversation may be very fluent and delightful and learned. But, after all, he must not complain if you test his merits as a physician, not upon his theories, but upon his practice.

Now, my friends, this Bible professes to do a certain gracious work for fallen human nature. It professes to make men better; more unselfish, loving, benevolent, honest, upright. Men ask, Is this accomplished? It is claimed that religion makes men nobler in every human relationship, purer in motive, more patient in suffering, more steadfast under temptation, more forgiving in spirit, more truthful in speech, more honest in business, better parents, husbands, wives, sons, daughters, neighbors, citizens, merchants; in short, nobler patterns of manhood and woman-

hood, in every possible human condition. Is it unreasonable, then, that the world should inspect the lives of its professed exemplars, and their final verdict should rest, not upon the deductions of logic, but upon the facts witnessed? But whether we object or not, this will be the final crucial test in the case. And when the world's deep-rooted and loud-voiced unbelief has been at last silenced, believe me, it will be, not by the might of argument, but by the might of God's own truth, incarnate in the lives of his own peculiar, Christ-redeemed people.

It will need but a moment's thought, I am sure, to convince us all, that no truth in this world, religious or secular, has any appreciable power over men that was not an incarnated truth; in other words, an experienced truth, a truth lodged *experimentally* in the head and heart of him who utters it, for the persuasion of his fellow men. A man who has himself felt, for example, the horror of intemperance alone can thrill other minds with living pictures of the terrible evil. A man who has taken into his heart and taste and sensibility, as well as intellect, a noble art or science, alone can move other minds to enthusiasm on that subject. And without some degree of enthusiasm no one mind, on any subject, can really influence another. Now in regard to Christian doctrine, if a man stands up in a pulpit and preaches a doctrine he has not felt or experienced in

his own soul, you know it at once. You know whether it be *head*-preaching or *heart*-preaching to which you listen, and if there be no heart in the utterance, it will have little power over you.

You, a Christian man, go to an unbelieving neighbor to warn him of his sin and to seek to win him to the cross of Christ. He knows instantly whether you are speaking what you feel, what has sounded the depths of your own responding soul, or whether you are merely uttering conventional phrases and pious cant, and your words will reach him or not, just as he sees they are vital or not at the center of your own being.

And now, since experimental religion or truth experienced must lie, as we have seen, at the basis of all genuine Christian power in the world, another fact of great moment comes into view. It is this, that personal Christian influence will widely vary, even in the case of genuine and truly experimental Christians. Why so? For the simple reason that no two human souls ever experience truth precisely in the same manner and degree. Take a simple illustration of what I mean. Jonathan Edwards, when brought into the kingdom of God at conversion, saw Christian truth at the angle of God's sovereignty. His whole soul was entranced with that one overpowering thought and that one thought filled and transfigured the whole sky of his intellectual vis-

ion. That one thought became the key-note of all his subsequent religious experience. And that one thought, it is not too much to say, is only sublimely repeated through all his voluminous and masterly writings. George Whitefield, on the other hand, at conversion saw Christian truth at the angle of divine Love; and how, again, did that glorious theme swell in his heart and burn on his lips, through all his wonderful ministry! Now it is a noted biographical fact, that each of these men was peculiarly successful and powerful as a preacher, just on the line of truth which he himself had most deeply and roundly experienced. He could hold forth that particular truth of God's Word better than any other.

The apostles themselves had their distinguishing "gifts." We would not now willingly spare from the New Testament either Paul's sublime expositions of faith or James' pungent doctrine of "works," or Peter's fiery zeal, or John's seraphic meditations, for these idiosyncrasies of character and of style are all needed to complete the circle of inspired instruction bequeathed to all ages of time.

So, again, Christians after conversion arrive at very dissimilar personal attainments through God's personal providential dealings with them. One Christian, for example, is called preeminently to the baptism of suffering and at length attains in a marked degree the grace of patience.

Now that disciple, thereafter, can hold forth that particular virtue of the gospel as no other disciple, not called to a like discipline.

It was my opportunity once to know a poor Christian woman, living in a humble cottage, bedridden for years, suffering all the privations of poverty, and yet whoever entered her presence, saw her face ever lighted with the same serene, happy smile, and her lips ready with a word for her Saviour. Not a murmur escaped her lips. On the contrary, she was continually recounting the mercies of her God and his wondrous goodness to her. Her only lament to her pastor was that she had no opportunity for usefulness. Usefulness! Could that pastor, with all his learning and cunning skill of words, produce a sermon on patience having one tithe the power that that poor woman, in her lone cottage, from the pulpit of her sick-bed, was preaching seven days in the week to all who knew her! She was holding forth the truth in her life and that made it powerful.

You, my Christian friend, it may be, have been called to affliction in a peculiar way; bereft, it may be, of a loved companion or idolized child. God has never called me to the same bitter trial. Have I, then, a key of sympathy to unlock your heart and pour in healing consolation like one who himself has passed through the same furnace of sor-

row? I may come to you as God's minister; I may come to you with the abounding comfort of his Word; from the depths of my soul I may pity you, but I have no power to sympathize with you like one whose own heartstrings have been torn by the same terrible grief.

This principle, I here announce, runs through unquestionably the whole circle of human experience. Whatever God has enabled you or me specially to experience and to appropriate of his truth, that particular truth we can communicate to other minds better than any one else. Whatever he has called us especially to suffer of hardship, infirmity, pain, grief, trial, of whatever kind or name, by virtue of that suffering God henceforth commissions and ordains us to be ministers of grace and comfort to his stricken children around us, suffering in like manner. We are called of God to hold forth in our lives that particular phase of Christian truth and discipline; and we can do it better than any one else.

So, again, the different social conditions and relationships existing among men open up specific channels of influence, and lay an obligation upon every Christian disciple for a peculiar personal work. Society in this world is graded naturally and artificially. Men are classified or separated from each other by their tastes, occupations, nationalities, education, professions and religions. Society exists in cir-

cles, wheels within wheels. Now persons thrown together in the same social circle, following the same pursuits, cultivating kindred tastes, possessing like sympathies, ought to find an access to each others' hearts, not open to strangers. Men bound together by the tie of a common profession ought to have more influence reciprocally, with each other, than those without such mental or professional affinity.

A Christian physician ought to have more influence over an irreligious brother physician than anybody else. A Christian lawyer, soundly converted, ought to have a hundred times more influence for Christ among lawyers than any clergyman can possibly have, because he understands, as no outsider can, the peculiar mental temptations, prejudices and susceptibilities of his class. So, whatever affiliation of taste or sympathy binds men together, that social bond in every instance, I affirm, ought to be converted into a magnetic wire, along which shall flow perpetually currents of sacred influence for Christ. You have heard of the Moravian missionary, who, in order to take advantage of the powerful social principle, when sent among slaves, put on their coarse attire, toiled with them in the field, shared their humble meals, slept in a like lowly cot, that by this Christlike power of sympathy he might find an avenue to their degraded hearts. And now, my friends, if in any Christian community, all through the fibers of society, up

and down, the social principle, to speak now of nothing else, was everywhere consecrated to Christ, what an accession of hallowed power, at once, to the Christian Church of God! If all the ties of blood and friendship were made electric for the Saviour; if every bond of sympathy, born of profession or occupation or trade, were made, as it might be, a hook of steel to draw some soul to the cross, what a mighty enginery of moral power would at once be set in motion for the spread of God's truth!

Not a Christian hears me to-day but can work for his Master in lines and places where I as a minister have no power. There are circles of influence where but one soul can occupy the center, and not one before me but is surrounded by such a circle. Many of you, all this coming week, will walk side by side with some friend or school-mate or companion or business associate, to whose ear and heart, beyond all others, you have confidential access. Christian friends, in all our varied callings and circles in life, are we striving to make every social tie a lever of consecrated influence for the Master's honor and the salvation of immortal souls? Be assured that not till this is done, will the Church of God become that mighty, resistless, organic influence, which God instituted it to be, in this sin-stricken world. If then there be any truth unfolded in my text to-day, or any force in the facts now presented, they

all lead us, as it seems to me, directly to this conclusion, that it is the height of folly to expect that this world will be won over to Christ simply by the formal proclamation of abstract Christian doctrine—in other words, by preaching without practice, or that the so-called ministry of the Church is to do the main work of holding forth the word of life, while the Church as a body shall remain neutral and unemployed.

We know well the indispensableness of a wise, brave and skilful general at the head of an army; but in military matters we know as well that the officer's duty is not so much himself to fight, as to organize, instruct, lead and bring out into faithful service all the fighting qualities of his united soldiery. What now would be said of a general who, on the eve of an engagement, should lead forth his troops to the battle-plain, draw them up in solid squares, order them to "ground arms," fold their hands and look on, while he met the enemy! And yet there are Christians, not a few, who Sunday after Sunday go to church, draw themselves up decorously, rank and file, in the pews before the minister, and look on to see with what skill, single-handed, he shall fight the battle of God with sin and the devil. Then they go away from God's house, commenting on the effort, but apparently without a thought that they have any part or lot in that stupendous conflict which is raging between the

marshaled hosts of darkness and of light! Brethren, do you think this world will ever be conquered for Christ by this method? If not, is it not time to change our policy, and in solid phalanx throw our united columns as a church of churches against the center of the foe, and then look around us, and see if (by God's help) he has not staggered under the onset? This, as I read his Word, is God's ordained method of fighting sin in this world—a united church, shoulder to shoulder in the strife.

As I have said, there is not a Christian but can do a work *no* minister can do. Many a minister would be a great gainer could he lay off the "minister" wholly in reaching many persons. With a large class, a minister's profession alone is well-nigh a perfect barrier to his doing them any good. It is an established principle in military tactics, as you know, always, if possible, to execute a flank movement upon the enemy. If you march up in his face, you must meet all his guns and fight him behind his chosen intrenchments. But if suddenly you can maneuver a side movement, and come upon him unawares, not unlikely you will dislodge and overpower him. Now a minister must always attack in front. His profession itself rings a bell before him and everybody knows he is coming! He must march right up to the guns as they stand primed and aimed, and contend with the sinner or skeptic be-

hind his chosen intrenchments. Of course he contends at great disadvantage. But if now in secular life, in the ordinary interviews of companionship or business, at some unexpected moment a faithful disciple of Jesus reveals a shining Christian principle, or drops an earnest word, it strikes at an unguarded point, and not unlikely, the conscience, taken unawares, is fatally pierced. Oh, how often thus has some smooth pebble of truth, slung from the hand of some unpretending combatant, slain a very giant of unbelief before whom the whole army of the Lord, it may be, has trembled! And so, if the minister's profession did not embarrass him, no minister, as we have seen, has that complete and rounded personal experience necessary to give him efficacious access to all human souls.

This broad experience is the product of the church as a whole; and, therefore, the work to be done must be done by the church as a whole. No single Christian, be he never so able, learned or saintly, is more than a single stone in the mystic temple Christ is rearing. The whole church with Christ at the corner and the headstone laid, will be that temple at last, finished, glorious, symmetrical. Brethren in Christ, soldiers of the cross, do we not need the whole army in this great warfare to which we are called? In that gigantic struggle from which we have but recently emerged, a saved nation, could we have spared any arm of the patriotic

service on land or on sea? Could we have spared cavalry, artillery, infantry? Could we have spared our picket service, our sharpshooters? Brethren, we want more sharpshooting in the church! We want Christians who will pick their men, and, heaven helping, not leave them until they are brought to Christ. As we are confronting principalities and powers of darkness in God's work, as in this unbelieving age a very battle of Armageddon seems waging at our doors, as God's anointed people, do we not need, in this great Christian campaign before us, beyond everything else, a more concerted, consolidated forward movement under our great Captain of all his loyal forces against the common enemy? Do we not need to have every sword clash and every bayonet ring into its socket all along the embattled lines of the militant Church of the living God? And then we, too, may look for victory.

RUNNING WITH PATIENCE

"Run with patience." — Heb. 12: 1.

RUNNING WITH PATIENCE

This chapter opens with a magnificent picture. Its background of metaphor is a Grecian amphitheatre, where thousands of eager and applauding spectators are gathered to witness a Grecian race. The preceding chapter, that famous eleventh of Hebrews, is inlaid, as you remember, with a roll of illustrious names, which, like an imperishable mosaic, down all the Christian ages have gleamed forth from the gallery of God's Word. These ancient heroes of faith, with all the ransomed angelic bands, are pictured by the apostle, in this opening of the *twelfth chapter*, as gathered in some supernal and glorified convocation, a little beyond our mortal ken,—the Church above triumphant—to witness the race for heaven's crown of the Church yet below, struggling and militant. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," he writes, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

Every color and shading of this passage would repay our prolonged study. But narrowing our view and shutting off, if you please, all side-lights, let me invite your at-

tention for a few moments, to the simple injunctive clause, "*Run with patience.*"

I must think, brethren, there is inspired wisdom in this simple collocation of words—the most active image in our language as descriptive of human conduct, coupled with the most self-restraining and contempered word in human speech. Nothing could more perfectly symbolize complete, strenuous, intense exertion than this figure of a race, and yet in immediate connection with it is a word embracing in its primary idea all the most conservative and self-repressing qualities that enter into human character.

But in my judgment, both words are needed, and just where they are. They are the two segments of a circle—the two hemispheres of a perfect, rounded, spiritual development. A Christian character which does not combine in itself both of these factors in joint operation, I take to be a character incomplete. The progressiveness of action needs ever to be allied with the resistance, the counterpoise of patience.

For a moment at the outset let nature shed light on my subject. Every strong, steady and reliable movement in nature, as you know well, is the resultant of antagonistic forces. The majestic and undeviating roll of the planets through space is attained simply by balanced powers, centrifugal gravitation just equalling centripetal force. In

like manner every physical growth and phenomenon throughout nature we find on examination to be the offspring of opposing laws wedded into harmony, cohesive attraction just offsetting specific gravity, chemical affinities precisely matching and poising each other, magnetism and electricity with their positive and negative poles.

Philosophers now tell us that the physical universe itself, from the most central sun that flames above us to the smallest pebble that is washed by the waves of the sea, is but one great dynamic system, whose sublime and visible repose is only latent antagonisms held in balance.

Now what is thus true in nature, I think is no less true in the realm of character. Inward, self-generating force, we all recognize as the first attribute of manhood. But a character is sadly defective, as we all admit, if the force, however great, be all of one kind. Character needs *propelling power*; equally it needs *checking power*. A man, for example, all propulsion of will, ardor of temperament, dash, spurt and fume, is like a locomotive with no power to reverse its motion; is like a railway train on a down grade with no brakes for the wheels. Every rightly developed character, then, is simply personal forces in equilibrium. If you seek a man, you seek force, but force balanced.

Now educators of the young, parents oftentimes, as it seems to me, seriously misjudge their children right at

this point, lavishing their unstinted approval on mere negative, forceless amiability, while reserving all their prophecies of evil for the child or pupil which early exhibits strong self-assertion, independence of will, so called, and an ardent impulsiveness of temperament. But these characteristics, in nearly all cases, I take to be simply one-side developments of a superior character. A boy who has not these forces to some extent is hardly a boy. Certain it is, he will never become a man. What youthful character needs, in all cases, in due time, is a proportional development on the other side; of the higher and restraining principles of mankind and self-respect—conscience, reverence, and a high and noble life-ambition. And thus what in youth are often termed wayward traits, how often under the influence of Christian education and the restraining grace of God, do they become the truest and grandest motor-forces of society!

Paul, as I conceive, would not have been the chiefest of the apostles had he not been the chiefest of persecutors. In a modified sense, we may say, he would not have been the Christian he was, if in his dark and unconverted days he had not been, as he afterward so humbly and penitently confessed, the "chief of sinners." That is, the temperament, the nature which made him the one, under God's overruling and all-conquering grace at length made him the other.

Applying these principles to the ongoing of human society, we see reformers, of more benevolence than knowledge of human nature, lamenting the existence of conservative influences in the community, which so stubbornly modify and counteract, their own efforts. Conservative men, on the other hand, deplore just as honestly the existence of radical and enthusiastic tempers, which, as they imagine, are pushing on the car of reform too hotly. But I suspect, friends, that society could not well spare either of these moral forces. Mark you, I am not now speaking of a misnamed conservatism—a modern fungus growth, which too often, it must be confessed, steals the honored title only to protect vice and stretch its vulture wings over every form of rotting iniquity in the land—but I now speak of genuine conservatism, as a legitimate and principled force in society, and I repeat, in my judgment, both forces are needed, like centrifugal and centripetal gravitation to a planet, keeping after all, I suspect, in the long run, the chariot of human advancement in its safest and most successful orbit.

In like manner this personal equipoise or capability of self-balance enters largely into all great individual characters the world has known. Only a strong character, in any sphere, can *wait* as well as *act*. Only a great man can be truly patient. Only a richly furnished soul can bide his

time and achieve the heroism of silence. Mediocrity blusters, swaggers, explains; only a crowned soul, of regal self-poise, can calmly stand amid detraction and misapprehension, and with uplifted eye, mindful only of the star of duty, wait the day-dawn of a better future. Only a hero-spirit, I think, can rise above the noisy surf of contemporary judgment foaming at his feet, and mounting the watch-tower of his own conscious integrity or genius tranquilly turn his glass toward the horizon of the ages. Said Kepler, king of astronomers and sublimest of the sons of earth, on the annunciation of his three great astronomic laws, more than two hundred years ago, standing amid the scientific derision of his time: "If God could wait six thousand years for an *observer*, I can wait a century for a *reader*." And the readers have come! Said Victor Immanuel, Italy's hero-king, nearly a generation ago to his Sicilian parliament: "Seigniors, it is as wise to wait at the right time as to *dare* at the right time." And that intellect only, let me say to you, wears the seal of God's own nobility which on the tumultuous arena of human events and opinions, is able, at all times, rightly to temper patience with daring.

In the light of these reflections, turning our thoughts more directly to the contemplation of the Christian life, are we not prepared, my brethren, to attach a somewhat

added significance to these words of the apostle to-day: "Run with patience"? The highest ideal of Christian character is ever a just union of the active and the passive virtues.

The best type of Christian manhood is a joint product of the two. The Christian life, first of all, is a race, and the word, as we have seen, is the most concentrated simile of human activity that Scripture employs. It implies the completest and intensest forthputting of all our voluntary powers. The ancient racer bent every energy for the goal. He struggled, agonized for victory. So must the Christian "run that he may obtain." But while he runs, his loins must be girded with the grace of patience. He must temper zeal with knowledge, courage with fortitude, impulsiveness with self-containment, the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove, a fiery eagerness to do with a calm willingness to wait, if need be, and to suffer.

As a matter of fact in Christian experience, I think we shall find that the passive side of religious character is usually the last to be developed. The young convert burns with enthusiasm. His zeal is uncurbed and effervescent. His love is demonstrative. His soul is swayed to and fro with the surging tides of a new-born devotion. Like mercurial Peter, he is ready to go with his Master

both into prison and to death. He impetuously draws his sword to smite on every side the enemies of religion. He is equal to any exploit of faith, to any achievement of daring. But on the side of patience, he is yet a child. And I think every follower of the lowly Master is obliged to learn, often through painful rebukes and discomfitures, as did Peter, this last great lesson of the gospel. I think, especially, that every Christian minister is obliged to return often from labors, to stand once more before that sublime picture of incarnate Patience delivered in the four Gospels, before he receives that full baptism of humility and brooding, self-forgetting love, that makes him truly "wise to win souls."

The young soldier of the cross, how apt to think that the great Goliath of iniquity shall fall at a single stone hurled from his valiant arm! But, alas, he soon finds that in this great warfare we wage not with flesh and blood. Satan and his hellish host do not so quickly fly the field. We must fight and fight again; rest upon our arms and then renew the desperate conflict, though for weary months and years God gives us scarcely an earnest of the coming victory. My friends, was not this the patience of the Master? Open once more the wondrous record. See him weeping over incorrigible Jerusalem. See him bearing with the ignorance and perversity of his own disciples

down to the very last, gentle and compassionate ever toward the erring; meek under insult, his motives impugned, his teachings unheeded, and yet not one murmuring or retaliatory word though his ministry. On the contrary, love, compassion, ineffable tenderness seemed to shine out all the brighter as the very midnight of human guilt and obduracy closes around him. Dear brethren, have we any other pattern than this to work by?

And thus it comes to pass, I apprehend, that every disciple learns in process of time what perhaps he did not dream of at the first, that, as a rule, it is unspeakably easier in this world to *do* God's will than to bear it. How soon does the young Christian discover after his conversion, that a large part of his religious life-work is to come to him, in all probability, day by day, in the very humble and unpretending form of resistance to evil, simple unostentatious endurance under the shafts of satanic temptation; simple, steadfast obedience to a cross-bearing Lord, though called to put down his feet, it may be, even into his own blood-tracked steps, while no eye but His cheers and approves along his suffering! And what experienced Christian will not now give us this testimony, that fortitude, meekness, humility, sweetness of temper, bridling one's tongue, charity that thinketh no evil, forgiveness of injuries up to seventy times seven, and unfaltering trust in

God, though he seem about to slay us; that virtues and graces like these are a thousand times harder to practice and to win and exemplify than any of a more showy and aggressive kind? And how often are these passive virtues, my friends, slowly wrought out of the forge of God, after having been smelted in the fires of terrible discipline, even as our great Forerunner was made perfect at last through suffering!

Now for a moment, further, before dismissing our subject, let me ask you to look a little more closely at this topic in hand as related to constitutional peculiarities; in other words, to those mental and physical qualities which we often group together under the one word "temperament." Now what is a man's temperament? I take it to be that quality or peculiarity of his organization which makes him susceptible to outside influences, to his personal surroundings; which constitutes him, in other words, an impressible or variable being. Temperaments differ mainly, as I conceive, in point of excitability, or sensibility or emotional habit. I am aware that many persons regard excitement or high-wrought emotion in religion as altogether out of place. I cannot agree with them. Men get excited on all other subjects; why not on religion? But it must now be freely admitted that it does not lie in the power of any human being to be at all times

equally excited, or sensationally impressed, about religion or any other subject. Emotion, you need not be told, is one of the most variable elements in our nature. It differs widely in different persons. It differs widely in the same person at different times. There are periods of special religious exaltation with us all, and there are periods of corresponding depression, I am satisfied, with us all. Never yet a Christian, I care not how fortunate his temperament, was able to build an abiding tabernacle in this world, either for himself or anybody else, on the top of a transfigured mountain. Christ never meant he should. We are all, then, to have our shadowed hours, our valleys of humiliation, as well as our Beulah lands and our Delectable Mountains, on our pilgrim path to heaven. And whether mental philosophers and religious teachers approve or not, these emotional fluctuations in the religious life have always taken place and doubtless always will. But now, mark you, while a man's religion will vary, and in my judgment may innocently vary, as a simple emotion, it should never vary one hair's breadth as a spiritual power, —as a guiding motor-principle behind his whole responsible life. A ship's captain may crowd on more or less canvas, according to the weather and the wind; but unless that captain has lost his senses, he will not unship his rudder, or abandon his helm, or throw overboard his compass, let the

weather be what it may. For these latter are all fixed quantities in the science of navigation by which he is to hold his ship inflexibly on her course until her destined port is reached.

Emotionally, the winds of life may be favorable or unfavorable to you and to me, on our Christian voyage, but high above all shifting winds and storms that sweep and howl through our rigging, is set evermore, in God's own arch above us, the gleaming pole-star of duty, by which we are ceaselessly to steer. Consciously, or temperamentally, our love to God will change, our spiritual joy, our Christian hope on certain favored days, will arch above us a sunnier sky than on other days. This changeableness belongs to the very limitations and infirmities of our present life. But now, while I say this, remember that in every truly regenerated breast, deeper down, infinitely deeper down, than any conscious emotion or feeling, or temporary enjoyment or superficial excitability is rolling an undercurrent of calm, fathomless, unveering loyalty to Jesus Christ, our enthroned Lord, a loyalty knowing no abatement and no change. Ah, friends, it is not a difficult thing to be simply a revival Christian in this world. It costs but little to follow Jesus when all the world about us is shouting hosanna and clamorous to make him King! But when the fickle multitude withdraws, when the wave of popular enthusiasm recedes,

then to cling to the despised and crownless Teacher of Nazareth requires something more, believe me, than mere animal excitement, something more than a mere sensational piety. It requires that deep-hidden, foundation-rock of Spirit, born of *character*, upon which Christ is evermore building his Church in this world.

My brethren, unless I mistake, what the Church of God supremely needs among us to-day is a revival of religion, that shall be followed by something more than a stony-ground harvest—a revival with some subsoiling in it, that shall run its plowshare of conviction and repentance, first of all, underneath the deep-rooted and chronic worldliness of the nominal Church of Christ; a radical, principled piety, that shall stand for God, and put on his armor and face the foe and uplift the cross and fight the world, the flesh and the devil. Oh, for a revival once more of Christian consistency, of Christian steadfastness, of Christian conscientiousness in the carriage of the daily life; for a piety once more in our land, that shall be ribbed and stanchioned, through and through, with the live oak of moral integrity and Bible rectitude and vital godliness, seven days in the week! Heaven forbid that I should decry emotion or exalted types of religious experience! I simply say, let us go on unto perfection; let us complete the circle; let us “perfect holiness, in the fear of God.” What is “holiness,” in

the Bible sense, as well as etymologically? Simply "wholeness." A "holy" man is simply *a whole man, as God reckons him*. And shall we aim at any mark lower than that? Said the mother of Gardner Spring, of the "Brick Church," New York, many years ago to her newly converted boy, "Every Christian grace, my son, except one, has its counterfeit. You may love, but it may be a selfish love. You may have faith, but only the faith that trembles. You may have hope and joy, but they may be spurious. There is one grace, however, you can never counterfeit, it is the grace of *perseverance*."

Finally, only as we wisely combine patience with activity, waiting with running, shall we attain at last to the full stature of the perfect manhood of Jesus Christ. Neither factor can be left out. We must run, we must wait, wait upon God, not with the waiting of unbelief, not with the waiting of carnal lethargy, but with the waiting of unshaken faith and ceaseless prayer. While, on the one hand, we shun the Scylla of pride, of overweening confidence in unaided human ability; with ever more horror, on the other hand, must we shun the theological whirlpool, that Charybdis of falsehood, the popular maxim which first and last has lured so many churches of Christ to their spiritual ruin—the maxim of "waiting God's time." As a rule of human activity, that maxim, in my belief, is begotten of the father of

lies. God's time is man's time. God's time is ever the present time. God has no time when man may cease to work. He must run, but with patience. Faith and works then go together. Hand in hand, twin children of God, they must climb the heavenly road. If they separate they fail. If they separate neither shall enter the Golden City. Faith without works is dead. Works without faith are thrice dead.

Dear brethren, let us all aspire to learn this crowning lesson of the Christian life—to work and to pray, to do and to suffer, to labor and to wait. Let us not put asunder what God has joined together. Let us not divorce divine and human agency, but leave them just where God leaves them in his Word—evermore meeting and harmonizing in this higher and glorious circle of practical truth, brought us by my text to-day, "Run with patience."

THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." — 1 Peter 1:7.

THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH

In every divine tabulation of values, faith stands first. Nothing below heaven is so precious, we are taught, in the sight of God, as faith in the hearts of his earthly children. Other objects, indeed, excite the divine regard. The beauty and perfection of his material universe; the heavens which declare his glory; the precious stones compounded in the crucibles of the earth; the gold and silver that vein the mountains; the gems and pearls that inlay the ocean's floor—all these material objects, we cannot doubt, have a recognized value in the divine Mind. Moreover, in the grandeur of his person and the kingliness of his powers, man, God's creative masterpiece, transcends in dignity all the stars that flame above him. And yet, man, made but a little lower than the angels, crowned with reason and immortality, without faith, without heart-fealty to the supreme Mind and Will of the universe, is only an alien and rebel child of the infinite Father of the world.

Clearly, then, it is the function of faith, and faith only, to unite a finite soul in the completeness of its being to God, as gravitation binds a planet to the sun. Without faith not only is it impossible to please God, but without

faith it is impossible for God in any conceivable sense to be God—that is, to maintain a moral and personal supremacy over the very spirit-intelligences he has created. Hence the Bible, as I have said, everywhere postulates faith as the first thing. It is the initial act of the new-born soul, and it is the final victory by which the world is overcome and heaven gained. Glancing over these sacred pages, we furthermore find there severest warnings, and denunciations are directed ever against the one parent-sin of *unbelief*. Thus, from cover to cover, the Bible clearly emphasizes the preciousness of faith. But turning now from the written Word to the ongoing administration of a divine providence over human affairs, and the same great truth confronts us, that in the divine estimation faith stands first. Why is so much mystery yet in our world, to darken our mortal pathway? Why is so little told us of the future? Why are so many enigmas of our race unexplained? And, above all, why has God left the great paramount truth of his own existence so indistinct and clouded that wicked men have it in their power to say, “There is no God”? Why has he not written this truth of his own personality and omnipresent government in such burning characters all over the sky, that modern agnosticism would be impossible—that no heart could disbelieve, if it would? Why is not the veil drawn for one moment from the invisible world so

near, and God's pilgrim children granted now and then an actual vision of scenes and glories inconceivable, and of despair that human words cannot measure? Why, I ask, with even an open Bible in our hands, is our knowledge of futurity so dim and circumscribed? Can there be any other answer to this question than that here and now we walk by faith and not by sight, and that the infinite Father counts faith to be the most priceless fruitage of the human soul, and to beget and nurture his divine principle he brings to bear all the appliances of his earthly government over men? Did you enter a schoolroom, and wherever you turned, hanging upon the walls and adjusted in different parts of the room, you saw maps and apparatus all illustrating the science of geography, you would say at once, geography is the branch of knowledge taught here. If entering another apartment you saw the walls covered with diagrams and mathematical figures, with equal promptness you would say, mathematics is taught here. So I must think that no thoughtful or reverent mind can for a moment contemplate the adjustment of this world, as related to human life and destiny, and not instantly conclude that the great and prime education to which God is here subjecting his human children is education in faith.

But, my friends, education is a process, a discipline, a schooling from lower toward higher attainments, from the

imperfect toward the perfect. Hence, Peter, thus addressing his fellow believers, "Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial [or the schooling] of your faith," by means of these temptations, may be found at last like gold that had been purged and clarified and made resplendent by fire. The emphatic word, then, in my text, evidently is this word *trial*—and faith tried is the theme it brings us.

Now one may have faith, true faith, and yet it may not be the highest kind of faith. My friends, one may have faith, a true child of God may have faith, true faith, and yet not faith of the highest kind. It may still possess adulterating elements, lacking standard fineness and quality simply because of not having passed through the most crucial and fiery test of the divine laboratory. Few things there are, we know well, in this world of ours which are not better tried than untried. How sweet to all our hearts is friendship, and yet how beyond price is friendship that has been tried—that has stood the test of years; been with us summer and winter; stood with us on the radiant mount of prosperity and gone with us down into the starless valley of adversity and never faltered! Who can put a price on friendship like that? What a jewel in the crown of any character is honesty, but with what tenfold luster does honesty shine that has been tried—that has been under the

strain of some terrible temptation, but has come forth from the furnace without the smell of fire on its garments! You have seen a ship leave port, the heavens bright, everything gay and trim; her sails white and her freshly painted sides glistening in the sun. And perhaps months after, standing on the wharf, you have chanced to see that same ship return. But now she enters the harbor under a blackened sky, with rigging torn, and hull and masts battered by the winds and waves of an ocean voyage. But you have said in your heart, this victory over dangers, this safe return, this joyous ending is better than all the sunshiny beginning.

Some of you have seen a regiment go forth, in the dark and thrilling days of the past, in the service of their imperiled country, and as they lifted up their proud banner into the air, how gracefully its immaculate folds unfurled themselves to the breeze, and like a thing of life, throbbing above waves of inspiring music, you have watched it slowly vanish from sight! After eventful months and anxious years you saw, it may be, that banner return. But oh, how unlike what it was on that proud morning of the regiment's departure! Why did lips now quiver as strong men looked upon it and thoughts crowded the breast too big for words! Why did that broken flag-staff, that tattered, smoke-begrimed remnant of a flag send a thrill through your souls,

that all its early beauty could not awaken? Ah, it had been tried; it was now a record of suffering! Every storm-stain, every tattered shred you looked upon was a heart-history of hunger and cold, of weary marches, of lonely watches, of battle groans, of flying shot, of dying men! Ah, friends, courage tried is better than courage untried. Patriotism, my friends, that has taken its life in its hand and gone down unmurmuringly into the fires of sacrifice, believe me, is something very different from patriotism that flaunts itself in swelling words! Yes, hang up the old flags, unsightly though they be. Religiously preserve every tattered thread, for through flowing tears other generations shall look upon them, and bless God for the heroes that laid down their lives that the nation might not perish. And so, my friends, I cannot hesitate to think that religious character tried, is far better than religious character untried. I must think that Christian faith which God has called to pass through the fires of discipline is something far more precious in his sight than faith yet only in the bud of promise.

One of the most beautiful sights to look upon in this fallen world, I grant you, is a young Christian, a new convert, who has just laid off his burden at the cross, whose rejoicing tongue is just loosed to speak his Saviour's praises, his face beaming with a new-found hope, and his heart over-

flowing with a peace the world knows nothing of. Yes, it is a beautiful sight to look upon in this dark world, and angels rejoice at the spectacle. And yet, as God searches and estimates character, I must think there is a more precious sight in his eyes even than that. I think Job, perfect man as he was at the beginning, was even a more illustrious saint when God had laid his hand upon him. I think Job was right in his philosophy, when he said, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Where in all the annals of history can you point me to a sublimer spectacle than that upon which our eyes rest in the land of ancient Moriah, as we see that heroic old patriarch, father of all the faithful, without a murmur proceed to fulfil the mysterious mandate of heaven: "Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of"? What a scene followed! Not one protest of nature. Not one rebellious word from that bleeding father's heart. To the very letter, the command is fulfilled. "And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." Do you think that Abraham had gone through no preparatory schooling of faith before he was ready for obedience like that? Do you think that David needed to pass through no deep wa-

ters before he was ready to say, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it"? Think you Peter was the same Christian when he followed Jesus to the judgment-hall, or when in the upper room, just before the betrayal, he boldly said, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death," as when, ten years after, he wrote his meek and comforting epistles to the persecuted Church of the Saviour? Ah, Peter needed a great deal of sifting before the chaff was separated from the wheat in his character. He needed to pour out many bitter tears before he fully knew himself. But, at last, if ever any man was qualified, gloriously, both by native character and by the fiery discipline of God's hand to address fit and sympathetic words to weak and tempted human hearts, it was this same old Christian hero, who toward the end of his apostleship penned these very words, "That the trial of your faith"—ah, Peter knew what that meant!—"that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

It cannot be doubted, my friends, that ordinarily much is reckoned as faith which is not faith at all, but simply its counterfeit. How much of Christian character, that in a time of revival the Church accepts as genuine, and as

promising precious fruit at length to the Master's cause, after a few months or years is found sadly wanting! "It dureth for a time, but having no root it withers away." Natural ardor of temperament, mere animal excitement, or forward zeal or sympathetic emotion, how often are they mistaken for the exercise of genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! How many begin the race, who do not finish it! How many putting their hand to the plow look fatally back! You remember that incident of Naomi, in the opening chapter of the beautiful book of Ruth, how that after the death of husband and sons she decided to leave the land of Moab and return to her native Judæa. By an etiquette of the country, she is accompanied for a distance on her return by the two widowed wives of her dead sons, Orpah and Ruth. But at length a crisis comes, a testing-place is reached, where these two daughters-in-law must go back or go forward. "And," we read, "they lifted up their voices and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her." Notice the difference: Orpah wept, kissed and forsook; but Ruth clave unto her, with a fidelity and self-surrender so absolute and grand, that the ringing words have come down all the generations since to put to shame all craven and half-hearted friendship: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou

lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

How many to-day, alas, in the service of the heavenly Master are like "kissing Orpah," rather than like "cleaving Ruth"! How many who begin with the shouting multitude to cry "Hosanna," at length when difficulty and opposition arise, when the yoke begins to gall, when the crowd begins to thin, when Gethsemane with its midnight loneliness, and Calvary with its noonday darkness, heave in sight, turn back and walk no more with the cross-bearing Saviour!

When one is truly converted and renewed by the grace of God, how little does any young Christian know what manner of spirit he is until God in his providence has put him to the trial! How much that with a young disciple is thought to be faith is something else—perhaps an instinct of courage, perhaps buoyancy of native disposition, perhaps the result of unshattered health. How many a Christian, in middle life and going forward successfully in the discharge of life's duties, mistakes his own energy of will, his own instinctive self-reliance for religious trust in God! While on a smooth sea, while his business prospers, while his health is sound, while the destroying angel passes by his dwelling and he never has been called to put his heart

into an open grave—so long as the sun shines and the sky is clear, his hope and his confidence in God are unwavering and jubilant. But let the scene change; let the sky darken; let night come on; let all God's billows roll over him; let Satan challenge the Almighty to put him to the test as he did Job and every worldly prop be struck from under him, ah, me, he will then find it a very different thing to have faith in the darkness from what it is to have faith in the sunshine—faith at shrouded midnight instead of blazing noonday!

"I thought but yesterday
My will was one with God's dear will,
And that it would be sweet to say,
Whatever ill,
My happy state should smite upon,
'Thy will, my God, be done.'"

"But I was weak and wrong,
Both weak of soul and wrong of heart.
And pride alone in me was strong,
With cunning art—
To cheat me in the golden sun,
To say, 'God's will be done.'"

"O shadow, drear and cold,
That frights me out of foolish pride,
O flood, that through my bosom rolled
Its billowy tide,
I said, till ye your power made known,
'God's will, not mine be done.'"

"Now, faint and sore afraid
Under my cross, heavy and rude,

My idols in the ashes laid,
Like ashes strewed —
The holy words, my pale lips shun,
O God, — 'Thy will be done.' ”

And yet there are those who have passed even this test and more than conquered. Have you never looked upon a beautiful Christian character, my friends, and envied the possession? If you have not, I have, and to me there is nothing so beautiful this side of heaven. Perhaps the lips have not always spoken in cultured accents; perhaps the shoulders were not always robed in silks; not always in ceiled houses or on broad avenues are these gems of God to be found; but wherever I have looked upon such a character, even if in a hovel, with involuntary reverence, I have stood uncovered and said, “Here is heaven’s royal blood.” And I have said to myself, “Why may I not possess such a character? Why may not the ornament of such a spirit be mine? Why may not that radiance of patience, that indescribable sweetness of trust, that un murmuring submission, now to drink every cup the heavenly Father places to the lips—why,” I have said, “may not such a character be mine?” I did not know what I was asking. I did not count the cost of the blessing I sought. I did not look back to see all those furnaces, seven times heated, through which that character had passed before all its dross was consumed.

In a "great house," the apostle tells us, are vessels both of honor and dishonor. Shall we then shrink from His ordeal, if at last we may become "vessels unto honor" meet for the eternal banquet-table of our King? What matters then, my friends, the beginning, if the end is glorious? What matters the storms we encounter, if in the harbor safe at last? What matters the conflicts we go through, if at last on the sea of glass we stand with the countless multitude? Then shall we understand those victor-words of the onward-pressing apostle: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." There faith shall end in sight. No more clouded pathways; no more satanic buffetings. Hope shall change to fruition, prayer to praise, grace to glory, and in the temple of our God, we shall go no more out. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

♦

A LIVING HOPE

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” — 1 John 3: 3.

A LIVING HOPE

The hope here spoken of is that of the Christian, the hope of adoption through Christ into the family of God, and the heirship of heaven. "Beloved," says the apostle, "now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

It is not a rare thing, my friends, to possess a religious hope. Indeed, the non-possession of such a hope, I take to be the rare and exceptional fact among men. All religions, ancient and modern, outside this revealed Word, are essentially optimistic in trend and character, providing a broad-gated paradise for all their nominal adherents, irrespective of penitence or purity in heart and life.

Did you enter any community to-day and question each individual you met, and did they consent to open to you frankly their inmost heart, I suspect not a single human being you would interrogate would be utterly destitute of a religious hope; undoubtedly vague, indefinite, largely unrealized to their own minds, but not one seriously purpos-

ing or expecting to fail of heaven. All false religionists cherish a firm hope of future salvation; the Mohammedan, the Buddhist, the Romanist, every pagan idol-worshiper expects to reach at last that happy celestial land.

It may be safely said, then, that hope is a universal instinct in the mind of man.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast;
Man never *is*, but always *to be* blest."

But not all hopes are genuine; not every bud of promise ripens into golden fruit. Many hopes are disappointed here. Can we believe it will be otherwise hereafter? The Bible speaks of a hope which shall enter into that within the veil, whose cable of indissoluble power enters into the unseen and eternal future; and it speaks also of a hope, which in the final trial shall be to its possessor as a "spider's web."

Since hope, then, is so universal an occupant of the human breast, and moreover, since it assumes undeniably so many illusive forms, let us pause a moment, if you please, at the threshold of our subject to-day to analyze somewhat the nature of hope as an ordinary exercise and experience of the mind. In common speech the word is used, as we know, with varying significations. Often it means nothing more than "desire" or "wish." One casually remarks, "I hope the weather may be fair on the mor-

row," that is, he wishes so, while the appearance of the sky, however, may be altogether unpropitious. "I hope that my friend, now sinking under the rapid inroad of some fatal disease, may recover his health and be spared to his friends," that is, I ardently and prayerfully desire such a result. Meanwhile, the actual probabilities of the case may be as a thousand to one against me and the desires of my heart.

Again, the word "hope" is often used not only with the simple meaning of desire, but united with this at other times we find a certain amount of impulsive or emotional expectation or confidence that the thing desired will take place. Now this emotional or pleasurable expectation, connected with desire, is probably the most distinguishing characteristic of hope—as an ordinary experience. Yet in this case, hope may be hardly more than a transient emotion. There may be in it a small sediment or basis of reason; but mostly it is the offspring of temperament born of impulsive or physical cheerfulness or natural excitability. It is the habit of some constitutions, as we say, to be hopeful; with others to be despondent. Persons of sunny, ardent mercurial temperament, of healthy bodily condition, are elated easily; hence hope more easily than do some; while others having perhaps just as solid grounds, abstractly considered, for hoping, yet by reason of an unfor-

fortunate temperament, are filled only with distrust and foreboding. Thus let any marked event occur of absorbing public interest, and straightway you will find nearly every community divided into two classes, ranging themselves in no small degree by the simple law of temperament. The one class looks on the bright side, the other on the "dark side;" the one class expectant, sanguine, enthusiastic, springing, it may be, at a bound to the most extreme conclusions; the other class, cool, cautious, waiting ever by the mere force of habit for the "sober second thought." Thus by a simple difference in physical organization, by a mere accident of health, it may be, the very circumstances are in one mind producing hope and in another are producing doubt, the external occasion of these conflicting results being in both cases precisely the same.

Now it will be evident to us all, I think at a glance, that when we come to examine the great Scriptural doctrine of religious hope, we must seek at once for some deeper and more abiding, radical principle underlying it than any we have yet found; deeper than simple desire or emotional expectation. But the moment we turn to this word as it lies on the *inspired* pages, we perceive instantly that it there covers a far broader territory of signification. Indeed, the word hope, in its highest and Scriptural sense, fathoms the very depths of our being. The keel of the word, if I may

so speak, plows the profoundest under-currents of the accountable immortal soul of man. It involves the exercise of the reason. It governs the will. It draws into its wake all the most powerful affections of the heart and kindles, exalts and progressively purifies our whole undying Christ-redeemed manhood. Hope, then, as the Bible puts it, is not simply an *emotion*, but a *principle*; not simply a sentiment, but a rudder of the life; not simply a meteoric flash across the sky of the soul, but God's own eternal daylight dawning within us.

In the light, then, of what has now been said, let us turn our thought, for a moment more, to the great and paramount question of personal religious hope in the soul.

In common language, the beginning of the spiritual life, or "conversion," is often described as the obtaining of or indulging in a hope. Now, plainly, before a case of Christian conversion, or the value of a religious hope can be decided, we must settle what kind of a hope has been obtained or indulged. If a mere desire to be saved, it is nothing more than was had before—nothing more than thousands have who make no pretention to a regenerated life. Such a hope may consist with entire absence of moral purity and with the most unmitigated selfishness of the daily life. But if this hope of which we speak goes further and embraces not only a desire, but also an emotional expectation of

future blessedness, yet if it stops here, and furnishes us no other or deeper sign of genuineness, after all it may be a mere product of excitement, an outgrowth of temperament; the child of animal spirits, or temporary nervous elation; but born without any clear sense of the turpitude of sin, without any true heart-submission to God, or self-renouncing faith in the crucified Saviour of the world. More and more, my brethren, as the years of my ministry are thrown behind me, do I become convinced that a grave mistake has been committed by the Christian Church in time past in conceding the prominence so often conceded to the mere emotional or temperamental quality in religious experience. So widespread is now the fruit of this mistake, that not a few accredited communicants in our churches hesitate not to indulge the belief that the genuineness of conversion, and indeed their own Christian standing, is to be decided mostly, if not wholly, by the amount of emotional or temperamental excitability through which they passed at some bygone period in the simple initial process of entering the kingdom of God.

Let me not be misunderstood. Emotion is not to be despised. Excitement, in my judgment, has its place in religion. Nothing can be more natural, legitimate or Scriptural, than that a human soul, passing through the most wonderful experience it can know in the flesh, should be

stirred to its innermost depths. The danger is that in the reviewal of this marvelous experience, hope shall at length root itself, not in the substance but in the mere accidents of that great spiritual event. The danger is that unwittingly we foist some attendant emotion or excitability, worthless in itself, into the place of genuine conversion and true heart-surrender to God.

I regret to believe that the number is not small who now base nearly all their evidence of personal Christian character on the naked fact that at the time of their conversion, so-called, they came out bright and clear in their hope. Perhaps some sudden and powerful transition of feeling was experienced, some great light seen, or some imagined voice was heard, or some strange happiness suddenly flooded the mind, like sunlight after a storm. And on this temporary and now long-past emotional experience they build to-day all their hope of heaven. My friends, in faithfulness to this Word which shall try us all at last, and to the teachings of Him who was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, I must say, if your hope and mine rests on no other foundation than this, the billows of yonder trial-day will sweep it from us like sand.

Nothing can be more unwise, in my judgment, than implicit reliance on a mere transient, purely phenomenal experience like that. These emotions in which we trusted

may have been the accompaniment of genuine conversion and they may not. Just there lies the danger. At best they are but incidents and accidents of the physical temperament and nearly as often accompany religious exercises confessedly spurious as those which are genuine.

Tested, then, by Christ's supreme rule of life-fruitfulness and of abiding heart-consecration to God, how often would it seem as though religious hopes had been obtained very much as men procure life-preservers, when about to take a voyage at sea, not as something to be put to instant use, carried constantly by the side, or treasured sacredly about the person, a help, a staff or a solace, all the changing journey over, but something when obtained to be laid aside, there to lie unmolested and unthought of against some last extremity! If some terrible storm at length arise, and everything else on shipboard shall go to pieces, then the life-preserver is hunted up, found perhaps out of repair, uninflated, but forced into the best service possible under the circumstances. How many Christian hopes when procured are laid away, apparently never designed for use, unless in some last peril, perhaps on a death-bed! Ah, my friends, believe me, a hope good for nothing only on a death-bed, will be good for nothing then! As you value your undying happiness, trust such a hope not an hour. Throw it overboard at once. It will play you false in the

last desperate trial. Rather, dear brethren, should our Christian hope be like the noble ship on which we sail, carrying us gallantly and gloriously through sunshine and storm alike; ever full-rigged and caulked and manned, our pride, our trust, our glory, on the great voyage of life, until our anchor we cast at last in the eternal haven.

Now what says our text? "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself." That is the Scriptural test of a religious hope. It is the only test safe to apply. If your Christian hope is genuine it will carry this unfailing mark. Every other mark is delusive. It will be a purifying hope. It will be an active, living, operative hope at this present moment, and will be growing fuller, deeper, brighter to the very end of our course.

A hope to be worth anything must be living. A hope alive once, but dead now, is worth nothing now. A hope alive ten, twenty years ago, but dead to-day, if such a supposition can be made, no more can feed my soul to-day than food taken into the body years ago can support animal life to-day, if no nutriment has since been taken. Of all dead things, dead hopes are worthless. Yet how many are preserving them! What if you saw a farmer, with an orchard of dead fruit-trees, the sap gone, the bark dry, not a sign of vitality left, but occasionally, perhaps once a year, going among his trees, digging at the roots, pouring on

water, enriching the soil! Year after year he continues this process, but not a leaf, not a blossom, not a bud starts. What would you think of such a method of horticulture as that? What would be said of such folly? Is it greater than that of scores and scores to-day, who are laboriously nursing defunct religious hopes, out of which all spiritual vitality has manifestly departed, if indeed they had any at the beginning? Would it not be better to dig up the old hope and get a new one and, if possible, one that under the light of God's face and the refreshing dews of his Spirit, shall bring forth unto the praise and glory of his name? "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Without pursuing the subject into other lines of development, the topic as already opened brings us, I think, a two-fold lesson, a lesson of caution and a lesson of encouragement. To some within the ranks of nominal discipleship to Christ, this subject should come, I must think, with words of salutary admonition. To those naturally ardent, impulsive, imaginative, excitable, the danger evidently lies in the direction of superabundant feeling and sensibility; too much emotion, beyond what is crystallized directly into character; beyond what is rooted immediately in conduct and utilized by the conscience and the will. Emotion in a man, I hold to be like steam in an engine, *good*, just so

far as it drives the wheels and propels the machinery; but *bad*, just so far as it overstrains the boiler, and simply hisses and screams through all the joints and leakages. Emotion is good just so far as it is the parent of deeds, the servant of principle and the driving power behind a consecrated and consistent life; not one whit further. Hence with fervid and impetuous natures, the danger ever is, as I look at it, constitutionally of hoping too readily in religion as in all other matters. Hence the superlative need with all such of rigorous and unintermitting scrutiny and self-examination, lest hope be found at last to have been fed, not from the deep and ever-flowing fountain-head of new-born love to Christ, but from the mere surface-streams of natural feeling and carnal excitability.

But, on the other hand, my subject to-day should minister, I am confident, help and comfort to many downcast and burden-bearing hearts. True, it is desirable for a Christian to be *unvociferously* happy, but to my mind, as I read the Bible, it is *not indispensable*. At least, there are marks of religious salvability immeasurably more indispensable. It is the tendency and glorious design, I admit, of religion to make the soul possessing it happy, just as it is the tendency and design of the sun God has hung above us, to bathe this earth with uninterrupted sunshine. But there are mists, clouds, exhalations arising at times from the earth itself,

which, in part, defeat the beneficent purpose of the sun. God's grace in a human soul tends ever to fill and flood that soul with ineffable joy. But in this life, alas, are human infirmities, mortal nerves, clouded brains, weak human hearts. No, my fellow pilgrim, not all that upward toiling way shall you and I walk in sunshine. Shadows will mottle our path. So far, indeed, as in us lies, our duty, our royal privilege is evermore to hope and rejoice in the Lord of our salvation. But, after all, let me tell you, there is something better in this world than even Christian jubilation. Shall I tell you what it is? Christian steadfastness, Christian humility, Christian obedience. We shall have time enough in heaven for ecstasy. On earth we want service. We shall have all eternity to wear the crown in; on earth we want to be God's children, patiently and unfalteringly bearing the cross after our suffering Lord, whether it be to the transfigured mountain-top or through Gethsemane and up blood-tracked Calvary; whether it be in darkness or whether in sunlight. And let me say to you, a test like that to-day of your hope and mine, if we possess it, is worth more to us as a sign that God accepts and seals us as his children than all the mere emotional transports that have thrilled all the Church from righteous Abel downward.

Measured then, by simple emotion, all Christian expe-

riences widely differ. The difference began at conversion. Did you ever know two conversions just alike? In an experience of twenty-five years, I never have. There is the same Spirit, but a diversity of operations. One conversion is signalized, it may be, by great and billowy tides of feeling, mighty throes of struggle. Other conversions are calm, reflective, attended with hardly any conscious emotion. And, as a matter of fact, it must now be said that some of the most satisfactory and fruit-bearing conversions the Church has ever known have been so silent and unimpassioned in their character that even the renewed heart itself could not decide within weeks and months, perhaps years, the exact time at which was wrought the marvelous visitation of God's regenerating Spirit. For one, I am growing into the conviction, brethren, I confess, that those conversions have quite as high a claim to the Church's confidence, where there is reflection, a Bible-educated conscientiousness, a calm, dispassionate decision for God, as where a high-wrought excitability is the predominating characteristic. So, after conversion, constitutional peculiarities continue to follow the Christian. One Christian is a singing Christian from the start; he is nearly always on the mount. Another is part of the time very high on the mount, and part of the time very low in the valley. And some poor saints of God, alas, hardly once get on the mount in a lifetime.

Now these superficial, temperamental differences which we magnify so much, I apprehend are not so much esteemed by the infinite Father of all. I cannot think they weigh so much in the scales of his omniscient judgment. I cannot believe they have so much to do with our real soul-character in his sight. After all, they are very much a matter of physical health or disease. As infallible signs of piety, or its absence, they are never to be unqualifiedly trusted.

Great stress, moreover, is laid by many on death-bed experiences, on the closing scenes of life. True, to the eye of affection, it is blessed to see heaven stoop to earth, to meet an expiring saint and halo his humble pillow with heaven's own light, ere he wings his way to unfading glory. As a testimony to the world of God's all-conquering grace it is valuable; but as a gauge of Christian character it must not be overestimated. Some of the holiest men, who have lived and walked with God, have entered Jordan in darkness. It is glorious to see the setting sun burst through all clouds and light up the whole western horizon with one flaming line of fire. It is blessed to see a saint at the close of a faithful life enter heaven, as under a triumphal arch, while we catch the angel voices shouting beyond. But, with all the gorgeousness, it is still better to have a sun shining at noonday than at nightfall. A clear day is better

than a cloudless sunset. My brethren, a triumphant life is better even than a triumphant death. Oh, when my soul shall stand in judgment, give to me the record of a life ever loyal to my Master and I will not ask you for death-bed raptures; for shall not all eternity be filled with rapture? What is a moment more or less in the *river*, when the *ocean* is beyond!

And now, my friends, I have but a word to add. If the religious hope we cherish to-day be simply an instinctive carnal desire to escape future evil, or if it be only an unfounded, irrational impulse of temperament, borrowing all its confidence from the ashes of some past experience, but with no governing power over our life to-day, we may be sure it is not a hope which will anchor our souls in safety in the swellings of Jordan. It is not a hope that will open to our expectant gaze the Gate of Endless Life.

Brethren, what is our "hope"? I do not ask whether yours to-day is a bright hope, or a dark hope; a sunny hope, or a clouded hope; a jubilant hope, or a desponding hope. In my judgment it matters little. I would fain know if you have a hope that is standing sentinel at the helm of your life, and that is more and more emancipating your soul from the power of sin and the dominion of the god of this world! Have you a Christian hope that makes you an

honest business man? Is yours a hope that makes you more like Christ?—more loving, gentle, patient, forgiving, benevolent? I would fain know if you have found a hope that leads you to the place of prayer; that draws you aside into secret communion with God; that prompts you to deny yourself, to crucify the flesh with all its affections and lusts and daily to take up your cross and to follow your Saviour wherever he leads the way?

I do not ask *when* you were converted, or where, or how, or what have been your peculiar religious experiences. These matters may all have an interest, but in comparison with the great paramount questions I now propound, they sink out of sight. Are you a living Christian to-day? Are you on God's battle-field to-day? Are you standing up for Jesus to-day, your face to the foe, your back to the world? Or are your Christian garments world-soiled, your Christian colors as a soldier of the cross trailing shamelessly in the dust?

Oh, may God search us all to-day as with a candle, that we may know ourselves, that we may take our reckoning, that we may discover the great central drift of our lives and know whether our feet are taking hold on life or on death! My dear friend, are you a living Christian to-day? I do not ask you what you have been in the past, but are you a living Christian to-day? And if not a living Christian to-

day, what evidence have you, what evidence can you bring me, in all this Word of God, that you ever were one—that you were anything more than a still-born disciple or a self-deceived professor of religion? “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

CHRISTIAN CONVERSION

“Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.” — Acts 26: 19.

CHRISTIAN CONVERSION

There are three accounts, it will be remembered, of the conversion of Paul given us in "The Acts of the Apostles:" the first by Luke, the writer of this treatise, in the ninth chapter; the second by Paul himself, in the twenty-second chapter, as he stood upon the stairs leading from the temple to the castle of Antonia, and just after he had been rescued from the mob by the chief captain of the Roman police; the third account in this twenty-sixth chapter, also given by Paul at Cæsarea before King Agrippa, during the latter's congratulatory visit to Festus, the newly installed Roman governor.

This third account differs in one important item from the other two. In the first two narratives, you will remember, after the fiery persecutor has fallen to the earth under the supernatural vision, he lifts the prayer to his expostulating Lord, "What wilt thou have me to do?" The reply is, "Go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." A devout disciple dwelling there, named Ananias, is instructed, also, in a vision, to go to the blinded and now penitent Pharisee, and laying his hand upon him, that he may receive his sight, communicate to him the great and

gracious truth that henceforth he is to be a chosen vessel unto his persecuted Saviour, to bear his name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. But in this account before Agrippa, this episode of Ananias is wholly omitted, evidently for the sake of condensation, while adhering to essential truth. Paul's great apostolic commission is here represented as conferred directly upon him by his manifested Lord, while he himself lies prostrate and trembling on the Damascus highway. "But rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." "Whereupon," adds the manacled apostle, "O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judæa, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

Before proceeding further, pausing for a moment right here, let me remind you that this vision of Paul was not his only one. In the very next chapter, the twenty-seventh,

occurs his memorable vision on shipboard, when the dismasted wheat vessel was driving helpless upon the rocky coast of Malta. An angel of God stood by him in the night saying, "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Another vision of the apostle was at Troas; an apparition of one clad in Macedonian garb who accosted him with the prayer, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." But probably the most notable of all Paul's visions is recorded in his second letter to the Corinthians, where he is "caught up into the third heaven, whether in or out of the body he could not tell," and heard unspeakable words, not lawful for a man to utter. Lest he should be exalted above measure through these abundant revelations, he informs us, a thorn in the flesh was given him, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure. Akin to this experience of Paul, it may be said in passing, was the vision granted the three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, when the Master's form put on a glistening whiteness, and in glorified conclave, Moses and Elias appeared talking with him. Peter, you remember, on that occasion lost his head and foolishly suggested the erection of three tabernacles on that wind-swept mountain height, where these celestial visitants might perpetually reside.

Now, my friends, collating the several visions of Paul, and others similar found in the New Testament, and studying them all carefully, I think we are able to deduce from them this important lesson, namely, that a religious vision in nearly every instance is fraught with danger; tends to unhinge the mind of the beholder, ministers to spiritual bewilderment and pride, whenever that vision *becomes anything more than a naked vehicle* for the direct communication of definite, intelligible and straightforward personal duty. A vision, then, which primarily feeds a love of the marvelous or excites prurient curiosity, or kindles emotional wonderment or begets a desire to scale heights of knowledge beyond the limits of written revelation—all such experiences it may be safely said, as a rule, are hostile to healthy Christian growth, and put in serious jeopardy the spiritual balance of the soul.

Returning now to my text: "Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision," says this great and most illustrious convert of the early Church. What does he mean by that except that he gave "instantaneous heed" to the transcendent personal message that then reached him? As related to that message, the flashing light, the audible voice, the rent sky, the unhorsed rider were only as *illuminated capitals*, heading the several paragraphs of that celestial communication, punc-

tuating and intensifying its tremendous import. Christ's own words unmistakably teach this. "I have appeared unto thee *for this purpose*, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." The paramount purpose, then, of this whole marvelous apparition which blazed athwart the raging persecutor's path was to communicate to him, humbled, penitent and prayerful, his great commission as an apostle henceforward of his crucified Lord. In that momentous hour of his history he received direct from the pierced hands of his risen Saviour, his credentials as a preacher thenceforth of his gospel. "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness."

I think, my friends, that light is thrown by this narrative on this vital question, namely, What constitutes a valid and sufficient evidence of Christian conversion? There is, unquestionably, a strong love in our nature for the marvelous, the extraordinary, the preternatural in human experience. Hence, in all ages, the religious instinct in man has been prone, largely, to feed itself on ecstasies and frames and visions and emotional exhilarations of one kind or another. This habit and bias of our nature has thus at times greatly colored the popular idea of gospel-conversion. The phenomenal *incidents* of conversion have been thought by many

to be conversion itself. A person's conversion has been regarded as genuine and indisputable very much according to the amount of vivid and spectacular experiences that have entered into it. The current notion has often been something like this: for about so long a period the soul must grope in hopeless bewilderment beneath frowning Sinai, its ears filled with retributive thunders and abysmal depths yawning before it. When, with phantasmagorial suddenness the scene shifts, and light, out-dazzling the noon, floods all the chambers of the soul, and hope is born under the ribs of despair. Now I do not say, mark you, that experiences like these never occur, approximately, in modern conversion. I simply now say, that they are not conversion itself. Their presence does not necessitate conversion. Their absence does not invalidate conversion. The one question to ask and the only question to ask is, Did the intercepted soul get its *commission* in that hour when it met its expostulating Lord on the highway of sin? Did it, or did it not, get its credentials as his minister and his witness? That point settled, and to my mind the whole question is settled of genuine or spurious conversion to God.

My friends, religion is not a passing crisis or momentary exhilaration of the soul. We sometimes hear it said of a new convert that he has "experienced religion." My brethren, if truly I have entered upon the new life in God, and

that path of the just which brightens to the end for myself, I do not expect to "experience religion" until I have fought my last earthly battle, carried my last burden, overcome my last temptation, shed my last tear, uttered my last prayer and death is swallowed up in victory. Nor then will the ineffable "experience" cease, but through unending years, I expect to know more and comprehend more with all God's beatified saints of the height and depth and length and breadth of that love that passeth knowledge. Religion, as the New Testament teaches it, is not a spasm or cataclysm of the soul, but patient continuance in well-doing, by heaven's grace, *unto the end*. In my judgment, sound piety, stable character and practical godliness, as a rule, are not so much promoted as imperiled by the placing large emphasis on transient and phenomenal experiences of any kind. For these reasons I incline to the opinion that disproportionate study given to the mere *pictorial* and *prophetic* portions of the Bible is, in most cases, attended with a peculiar mental hazard. These portions of sacred writ unquestionably have their legitimate use, but when one's mind becomes absorbingly interested, for example, in the visions of Daniel or Ezekiel or the unfolding seals of the Apocalypse of John, the temptation before such a student is, I must think, to know more of the "secret things which belong to God" than he intends any mortal

shall know. The imagination is thus inflamed; pride of superior insight and foresight is fostered and the investigator at length imperiously dogmatizes concerning mysteries and truths into which shining angels around God's throne gaze with holy trepidation. I have not been so fortunate as to know those whose imaginations have been caught by the glamour of premillenarianism or visionary views of the speedy second coming of Christ, whose minds have not at length, to some extent, been unhorsed and thrown off their center of gravity by the down-streaming glare of such a faith. I freely admit the eminent piety, the profound sincerity and the burning zeal of many who adopt this method of literal, pictorial interpretation, and yet I am constrained to think that this whole style of thought and reasoning indicates a mental eccentricity and treachery of judgment that in time will welcome other vagaries and in the end be fortunate if they do not collide with the whole accepted scheme of evangelical doctrine.

Impressed by similar considerations, I am led to deprecate the attempt, so often made, to be wise above what is written, concerning the future life,—the state of the departed. There is a natural desire and impulse with us all to follow our loved ones into the spirit-realm. We would fain know more of their glorified employment. We would rejoice to lift even the smallest fringe of the thick veil that

hides them from our sight. We long for some slightest channel of communication. At times we would give "worlds" to know if our dear departed ones consciously exist, if they still watch over us, if they cherish the old loves, and like ourselves, hunger for the blessed and immortal reunion. Desires and yearnings like these, I am sure, are not unknown to any heart now before me. And yet I am satisfied, after much thought on this point, that we know all about heaven it is *best* for us to know, and that is *safe* for us to know, at present. We are not ignorant of the grievous mischiefs in demoralized character and ruined Bible-faith that have come to many in recent times through the unhallowed inquisitiveness of modern spiritualism. Greater light shed on heaven than we now have, I am convinced, would not so much nerve as *unnerve* our own mortal steps in reaching there; would overwhelm us with unintelligible wonders, would stun and daze our minds, rather than steady and clarify them, as a too fierce sun-glare weakens and destroys the bodily vision. So, on the other side, it is often wondered that more vivid object-lessons are not given us of future retribution. But, you remember, when the rich man in the parable besought Abraham to send a messenger from Hades to warn his five brethren still on earth, the patriarch's reply was—a reply based upon the profoundest mental philosophy—"If they hear not Moses

and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." An unconverted mind, then, uninfluenced to-day by all the motives, moral, gracious, national, Scriptural, focused upon it, would, in no probability, be influenced by any amount of miraculous, phenomenal, sensational or ghostly evidence that could possibly be brought to bear upon it. The parsimony of God's converting energy in some directions is hardly less wonderful than its affluence in others. The *silences* of Scripture no less than its most adorable *revelations* attest an Author of infinite wisdom, skill, goodness, patience and grace.

But, without further remark along this line of thought, and recapitulating in a brief word the main lesson of this narrative, I close.

And first, from the hour of that wonderful scene, outside the Damascus gate, it stands forth on the forefront of Paul's entire ministry, that the one aim of his converted soul was *instantly* to transmute heavenly visions into practical Christian duty—to obey Jesus Christ. He was a man of fervid temperament. He was a man of great emotional capacity. He was a man of profound insight and exalted foresight in religious things, yet with the old prophet he ever unflinchingly held, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams." He began his regenerated life with the prayer, "Lord, what wilt thou have

me to do?" and he ended it with the triumphant affirmation, "I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith." That primal vision of his Commander hung on his steps to the end, as the pillar of cloud and flame led the Israelites, as the pole-star guides the mariner into the haven. And at any point in that career of more than twenty years of incomparable achievement and toil for Christ, might he not have challenged the attention of a gainsaying world with his declaration before Agrippa, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision"?

We learn from Scripture study to-day, the essential thing, what is the very marrow and kernel of true conversion—not a blazing sky, not sightless eyeballs, not a terrified cavalcade over meteorological wonders of any kind—but the *Master's voice*, distinctly heard by the listening soul in that solemn natal hour, setting it apart to a life of service for him. "For this purpose I have appeared to make thee a minister and a witness."

We may begin our Christian course with a bright hope or a dark one; with a conscious change of heart, or an unconscious one; with joy and outbursting gladness or with self-distrust and bitter humiliation and satanic buffetings, as we slowly grope our way toward the cross. We may enter the kingdom of life, as did Paul, through the fiery portal of a miraculous interposition, or, like the Philippian

jailor, amid earthquake shocks and midnight terrors; or contrariwise, like Lydia of Thyatira, whose heart the Lord opened while attending the Word—born of the Spirit of light and love and grace, quietly and gently, it would seem, as a summer rose opens its petals to the sun; or as the child Samuel, for whom Hannah prayed, and John the Baptist, forerunner of Christ, were sanctified from the womb. These phenomenal differences are unessential, but, brethren, it is essential that when we find Jesus *we find our commission*, the touch of his pierced Hand on our souls, anointing us thenceforward to a life of ministering and witnessing for him. “But rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness. . . Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus.” Not even did he wait to get back to Jerusalem to consult an oculist about his eyes, and recover somewhat his nervous tone, and get some primary instruction from the apostolic college, that he might begin his public labors judiciously. The holy impulse was too strong: “But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judæa, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.” As the converted engineer began with the fireman, and the fireman with the

brakeman, and the brakeman with the conductor, until the sacred flame shimmered and blazed along the whole flying train, so from that Damascus cradle of his new life, Paul's irrepressible passion for souls worked outward and onward until it reached the farthest accessible outpost of human sin and need in his own generation. And what a record, my brethren, at last, of service for the risen Christ: "Obedient unto death," we might write over his whole apostleship!

PITCHING ONE'S TENT TOWARD SODOM

"And Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom."—Gen. 13: 12.

PITCHING ONE'S TENT TOWARD SODOM

You are all familiar with the Scripture history preceding this biographical incident. Lot, the son of Haran, and the nephew of Abram, on the death of his father united his fortunes, we are told, with those of his more renowned uncle, and migrated with the latter when he went forth at God's command to seek the land of promise. Reaching at length on their journey the destined land of Canaan, after a brief sojourn a grievous famine drives the whole party south into Egypt. Here, after some disagreeable complications with Pharaoh, the Egyptian king, the patriarch is forced to return to Canaan. Lot still accompanies him. And now uncle and nephew take up their joint abode in the sterile mountain-regions around Bethel. In process of time both parties become rich, and ere long, as might have been expected, a strife is kindled between the herdmen of their adjacent flocks.

At this point Abram's character shines nobly forth as the first great peacemaker in history. "And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate

thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east; and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abraham dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom." And now straightway is added this pregnant and foreshadowing sentence: "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly."

The more we contemplate the character of Lot, as sketched upon the sacred pages, the more perplexing and enigmatical his whole history becomes, and were we left to judge him simply by his record as found in the book of Genesis, I apprehend our minds would be left seriously wavering as to the precise rank to accord him in the scale of moral integrity. But turning to the New Testament, we find that an inspired apostle endorses him as a "just man," and as one who, while a resident of Sodom, "vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." This testimony, to my mind, turns the scales. In

the light of such evidence we must assume that the character of Lot was substantially and savingly upright; nevertheless it is not to be concealed that this character was marred by the gravest defects.

Beyond a question he was constitutionally a selfish man. This was shown by his whole conduct toward his magnanimous uncle. It is more than hinted that he took secret part with his own servants in brewing the original quarrel, and without even a show of courtesy or gratitude he grasped at once at the lion's share in the division of territory suggested by Abraham. That he was weak in religious principle is clear from his choice of residence, unhesitatingly made among a people whose reputation for high-handed wickedness was already notorious. Yet with these abatements we must hold that the leaven of grace was in him, and though worldly-wise and feeble-hearted, at bottom he was a true believer. For though God in his retributive providence called him to suffer one uninterrupted series of disasters for his first wrong step, yet when the godless cities of the plain were ripe at last for destruction, ere the rain of vengeance fell the escape of Lot was ensured, though stripped of nearly everything but life—saved, yet so as by fire.

In thus taking a rapid survey of the life of this man, and all the calamities which overtook him at last and his ill-

fated family, it is not difficult, I think, to trace the whole brood of misfortunes back to a single starting-point,—that first inexcusable and fatal misstep, when, as a servant of God, a professedly religious man, for the sake of mere temporal advantage, he consented to pitch his tent toward Sodom. That one unwarrantable compromise with sin became the bitter fountainhead of lifelong misery and well-nigh proved his irreparable ruin. It appears from the narrative, as we now examine it, that when Lot first journeyed into the valley of the Jordan and drew near the doomed cities of the plain he carried his tent with him. It is quite probable that at first he had no design of entering into full traffic and intercourse with those ungodly people. He did not, you observe, at first, enter their municipal limits at all. He began by simply pitching his tent toward Sodom. Doubtless he thought this would be an entirely possible method—to drive an occasional sharp bargain with these wealthy sinners, but meanwhile avoid all personal contact, and thus receive no serious moral damage.

But it is not long before the migratory tent disappears. Lot is dwelling in Sodom and has taken a house. He is a naturalized citizen, and on terms of full communion with his neighbors. He has taken to himself, in all probability, a Sodomitish wife and is rearing a family of Sodomitish

children. His daughters ere long intermarry with Sodomish households, and at length all his worldly interests are fully identified with the city of Sodom. And so strong do his local attachments become, that after the noted battle with the four northern kings, in which Sodom with the other cities of the plain was subjugated, and Lot with all his goods carried into captivity, but at last rescued by the timely bravery of Abraham, he returns, we are told, to the ill-fated city, as if hopelessly joined to its fortunes. And thus to the end we find him, a confirmed citizen of Sodom until the wretched city's cup is full and the deluge of fiery wrath bursts from the sky. Then he flies for his life. He takes refuge in a cave, with no surroundings now of worldly luxury; without house or tent or swarming flocks or coveted riches; with only the shattered remnant of a once proud family, the curtain of history forever drops upon this unfortunate man.

The career of Lot, my friends, as thus delineated in Scripture, I must think is not wholly without its lessons for our own times. On the whole, as I have said, Lot is to be regarded as a good man, yet his whole religious character was compromised and his whole earthly life embittered by one fatally unwise step at the beginning. He made the mistake, a mistake made by many a servant of God since, of thinking it possible to live in Sodom without sooner or

later coming to harm; in other words, of thinking it possible to maintain the power of personal godliness uneclipsed in his soul and then with unrestrained greed throw himself into the race for worldly acquisitions. Beyond a question the Scriptures teach that there is both a right and a wrong way for God's children to hold intercourse with this world. No one will deny that the whole force of our Saviour's example and teachings was against any monastic separation of his own disciples from the world in which they lived. "I pray not," he said to his Father, "that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Plainly, then, it is the will of the Great Husbandman, that the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest.

But now, if I mistake not, this is the one vital point in question: How are God's children to fellowship this world? What said Christ to his followers? "Ye are the light of the world." That explains the whole. We are not to abandon the world and bury ourselves in convents and monasteries and social exclusiveness. We are to remain in the world. But how? As the world's "light" and spiritual exemplars. Now, God does not set up his Church in this world gradually to blend and melt itself away into the society of the world, so that, at last, you cannot tell where the seam runs, where the Church ends and where the world begins. But

he puts his redeemed Church into this apostate world evermore to dispel surrounding darkness. God's people, then, and the world's people, as I understand it (being somewhat of an old-fashioned Bible student), are to remain as distinct and unblending and invincible in all spiritual characteristics as light is distinct from darkness—and what can be more so?

Now it is true that our sinless Saviour when on earth incurred reproach from hypocritical men, because he openly associated with the impure, with publicans and sinners. But how did he associate with them? What was the associative tie that drew the immaculate Son of God into fellowship with the unclean and the guilty? Was it his lower nature or his higher nature? Was it his appetite nature, his fleshy nature, his self-pleasing nature, or his divinely compassionate and infinitely unselfish nature? My friends, it makes all the difference conceivable whether you and I fellowship this sinful world through our higher sympathies or through our lower sympathies; whether we are drawn to its companionship as world-lovers and sense-pleasers, or as self-denying and cross-bearing disciples of our crucified Lord. It is plain that Lot went to Sodom from a low motive, an unworthy motive. The whole story indicates it. "He lifted up his eyes," we read, "and saw the well-watered valley and the fertile pastures of

Sodom and Gomorrah, rich as the very garden of the Lord," and the sight was too much for him. He decided instantly to sink every other consideration in prospect of such remarkable material advantages. He did not mean to give up his religion. Oh, no; he meant to keep that—at least enough to save his soul, and yet not enough seriously to embarrass him as a money-maker. Therefore, he built no altar to the Lord. The first thing Abraham did, you remember, when he went to Bethel and afterwards, when he went to Hebron, was to build an altar to the Lord. But Lot built no altar when he went to Sodom. It would have been mere mockery if he had been going there with a worldling's motive. And yet, I suspect, in the main he designed to live a very correct life, and set a very good example before those outrageous sinners of the plain. To be sure, he went among them to get rich. That was his foremost thought, but, that object secured, we cannot doubt that he was quite willing to exert incidentally all the religious influence he could. Very generous of Lot! But those Sodomites were not fools. They saw at a glance what was really uppermost and undermost in Lot's heart. They saw that, although professedly a servant of the living God and a believer in unseen realities, practically he was just as selfish and world-greedy as the best of them; and that whenever God's honor and his

own private interests clashed, he was just as quick to prefer temporal advantage to treasures laid up in heaven, as any of them. When the Sodomites saw that, what further religious influence, do you think, could he have over them? When they saw it written all over his covetous life, *the world first* and God *second*, what was his religious example good for?

The truth is, my friends, as a religious man, Lot began life all wrong. He made a fatal concession to the world to start with, and to his dying day he never recovered the vantage-ground he then surrendered. Lower and lower he sank toward Sodom. He never succeeded in bringing Sodom up to his own level. Although he spent a long life in that iniquitous city, it nowhere appears that he exerted the least saving influence upon it, or postponed, for one day, the terrible doom that finally devoured it. Just this great mistake, then, let me repeat, Lot made as a religious man. He thought it possible to carry along in his own breast *two parallel lives*, but lives which the God of the Bible has declared to be forever and eternally antagonistic to each other; the life of a worldling and the life of a devoted and successful worker for God. The union is impossible, and I think Lot himself was satisfied of it at last. And yet how many are attempting it after him—how many professing disciples of Jesus Christ to-day seem making just this des-

perate experiment—as to how much of the world they can grasp with one hand, and not let go of heaven with the other! They have obtained a religious hope, and they do not mean to part with that; but their whole after-study seems to be, What is the very lowest premium for which they can ensure it? What is the very lowest bid the Almighty will receive for the pearl of great price? Their whole anxiety seems to be, not how much they can do for Jesus, but how little; not how much of the world they can renounce for his blessed sake, but how much they can keep, and yet pluck at last their starveling souls from the jaws of perdition.

My friends, I think I have seen Christians starting in on this experiment, and a down-hill experiment it is to the end. Our attention perhaps is first arrested by a kind of change coming over the devotional fervor of some brother, noticed perhaps at a testimony meeting, a prayer meeting. For some unexplained reason this brother is less spiritual than formerly. Soon we notice his seat frequently vacant at the weekly gathering. Then, not unlikely, his attendance ceases altogether. But if at this juncture we should seek him out, we should find that he has not given up his religion, oh, no; but his business has become very pressing. He is making a great deal of money and is very tired at night. But then he still designs to be very generous to-

ward the church and toward the minister and toward the heathen. And so he throws a sop to his conscience, preserves his hope, and gives his heart to the world. Oh, my friends, when I see a Christian brother entering on this down grade, I weep over him, and I feel like going to him and saying, My dear brother, you are pitching your tent toward Sodom. It is a dangerous way for a man's tent to face. I beseech you, be warned in time.

And if I mistake not, there is yet another way in which modern Christians and modern Christianity is often seen pitching its tent in the direction of Sodom, and with about the success that Lot had. There are those in our time who say, We must win over the unconverted world to Christ by meeting it part way. We must adroitly and judiciously keep out of sight the more disagreeable and repellent aspects of our religion. To be sure, ours is a religion of the Cross, and crosses are not apt to be very welcome things to worldly hearts in any shape. But then, if we can wreath them around with flowers, and cover up their unsightly angles and blood-stains and nail-prints, perhaps we can make them rather attractive things, after all, to self-indulgent and worldly minds; and perhaps they will become Christians almost before they know it. The world-renouncing and self-denying notions entertained by Christ and his apostles and the early Christians, are altogether too anti-

quoted for our modern age. We have found a more excellent way. Religion is a very cheerful thing. Christians are a very happy people, and very liberal withal, and inoffensive in their views. They are quite willing to meet sinners half way and show them what a sweet and beautiful thing religion is.

My dear friends, one word just here. And first, I beg you to remember that when, as a professing Christian, you propose to convert this world to God by meeting it half way, all the meeting will be on your side—the whole of it. The world will not budge one inch. All the concession made, you must make. You may go down to the world's level—the world will never come up one hair's breadth toward your level by any such expedient. To be sure, by your unauthorized conduct, to some extent, you may succeed in drawing the world's fire of open-mouthed raillery and opposition to religion, but how will you do it? I will tell you. *By striking the King's colors to the enemy;* by betraying the Son of God afresh in the house of his friends. That is the way you will do it. The world will applaud you. Certainly it will. It will probably court your society. Why? Because it has found out that it can use you as a tool and as a screen. But in its heart of hearts it despises you and brands you deserter from the Lord's army.

And now let me ask, What religious influence will you probably exert over an irreligious companion or neighbor or friend? When that companion, friend or neighbor sees you on his or her own level, just as world-absorbed, just as pleasure-seeking, giving days and nights with just as keen a zest to worldly amusements as the most worldly, and apparently just as thoughtless of eternal realities as the most thoughtless around you, I would like to enquire what amount of religious influence over the unconverted you will probably exert after that? I will tell you. Just about the same that Lot exerted in Sodom—no more; perhaps no less. I tell you, my friends, when the devil finds a Christian on his own lawful territory he claims himself the whole of him and all his influence.

When I see a Christian believer in our day, seeking or accepting a lifelong alliance, in express violation of the Word of God, with an unbelieving soul—impelled to the uncovenanted union by mere prospect of worldly advantage, yet propitiating wounded conscience with the hope that spiritual good may at length accrue to the unbelieving party; when I see such a sight, I say to myself, Yonder is a Christian man, or a Christian woman, pitching his or her tent toward Sodom. It is an unauthorized and a dangerous venture. When I see Christian parents adopting a line of education for their children, which from first to last exalts

the body above the undying spirit, oh, I mourn and say, There are tents pitched Sodomward. Well will it be if immortal interests are not sacrificed thereby. When the whole burden of home training says to an irrepressible child, "The world first and God afterwards," "The body first and the soul next," "A good settlement in life, and then the shining mansions of heaven;" when accomplishments, comradeships, associations and amusements are hazarded and encouraged, known, just as well before as after, to stand directly in the way of all spiritual thoughtfulness and of the soul's conversion to God, oh, I "remember Lot's wife" and that unhappy family for the most part perishing in the doomed city.

Brethren, I may not prolong. The whole doctrine on this subject may be summed up in a sentence. Hear it from the lips of Christ. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing."

My friends, there is an hour of retrospection at hand. There is an hour coming when you and I shall gaze backward on life, and then this world will dwindle. Believe me, when the glaze of death is on our vision, it will comfort us little to remember that we lived all our days a respect-

able, easy-going, world-conforming Christian life; that we have amassed property and lived in luxury and managed to serve the God of heaven so adroitly as to give no offense to the god of this world; and that our neighbors, as they witnessed our life, were undetermined even to the last upon which world we had the stronger hold, for we seemed to them to have an eye continually to the main chance in both worlds. Ah, in that hour such a religious retrospection will give us little comfort! But, then, one cross borne for Jesus' sake, one unhallowed temptation resisted in his name, one worldly pleasure cheerfully surrendered for his honor, will weigh more in our esteem than a thousand worlds like this! Brethren, be not deceived; the god of this world is a hard master to serve, and never a Christian but found it so in the end.

Let us, then, beware of beginnings. It is the first step that costs—the first ignominious lowering of our Christian colors before the onpressing hosts of anti-Christ. Let us beware how we are ashamed of Jesus, and of his Word in this adulterous, modern generation. Better, far better to dwell forever with faithful Abraham in the sterile mountains of Canaan, if God's altar is there, than with covetous Lot to go down into the very fattest pastures of wickedness, if God's blessing and God's smile we must leave behind.

THE SOLVING OF DOUBTS

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."—John 7: 17.

THE SOLVING OF DOUBTS

The word *doctrine* in its primary use directs our attention to a special department of truth. The word indicates a peculiar type or phase of truth, generally some truth as applied or fitted to be applied to human conduct. A doctrine, then, I take to be a given teaching, set forth in such terms, and after such a method, that it can be put into actual practice by the pupil who learns it. This plainly cannot be predicated of all truths. Hence we do not ordinarily say, a doctrine of astronomy or a doctrine of geology or a doctrine of mathematics. More naturally and correctly we say, a truth or a principle of astronomy, or mathematics, because these purely scientific truths have no direct, necessary and exclusive application to human conduct.

But entering the sphere of morals, of politics and of religion, the case is different. We are now in departments where truth assumes at once a fundamental relationship to the life of man. Hence we use the word doctrine. We speak of the doctrines of stoicism, the doctrines of socialism, the political doctrines of Jefferson, the religious doctrines of Buddha, of Confucius, of Christ.

A doctrine, then, I repeat, is a truth in all cases vitally

related to conduct. Take it away from conduct, and you take away a part of itself; a part of its very essence and substance, as a truth prehensible by the human mind. For example, how could we judge of a political theorem, apart from any actual or possible working of that theorem in the world's history? How could we judge of a system of morals, apart from any fruit that system has brought forth or is fitted to bring forth in human life? And how can a man know anything about a religious doctrine, if first he divorces it from all life and studies it as a naked intellectual abstraction?

Now, my friends, above every other body of truths, Christianity, the religion of Jesus Christ, comes to us today as a system or syllabus of doctrines. Every truth of this gospel of the Son of God is set before us in a generic or indissoluble relationship to human duty and its human destiny. Indeed, cut this vital cord between them, and you drain that truth of its very life-blood. You tear the very heart of its meaning out of it. You rob it of all its significance, and leave behind a mere husk of a truth, the most empty and meaningless of dogmas.

So with this Bible, as a whole. It was not sent into our world, let me remind you, as a compilation of metaphysical puzzles, designed primarily to tax the strength or subtlety of the human intellect, nor as a museum of antique won-

ders, along whose corridors and lofty alcoves one may stroll and gratify an idle curiosity; but every truth of this revelation, with supernatural wisdom has been framed for a practical end; to do a certain gracious work for our fallen humanity. These transcendent truths, now collated and bound together in one harmonious volume, were meant to be, as I conceive, simply a glittering sheaf of heaven-tempered weapons, divinely furnished to the militant soul of man, wherewith it may combat successfully the principles of earth and hell, and win at last the crown of life.

Plainly, before any religious doctrine can be judged of properly, it must be put to use. It must be applied to its end. It must be brought into contact with responsible life. It must germinate in human hearts and flower into actual human experience before you really have any data with which to answer the question of reason: "Is the doctrine of God or is it of man?"

And now right here, let me further remind you that the Bible is not alone in this peculiarity of its contents. There are other sciences besides theology whose truths can be studied only in connection with collateral truths. Borrow a very simple illustration of this from the vegetable world. A grain of wheat or the acorn of the oak has a fixed and unchanging relation to the soil which covers our earth. Suppose now the problem to be, to decide on the genuine-

ness of an acorn or a grain of wheat, which I hold in my hand. I wish to know whether that wheat-kernel is living or dead. How am I to decide? Did I treat it as infidels have been accustomed to treat a doctrine of Christianity, I should send first for an optician to come with his microscope and peer into it, on this side and on that. And then I should send for a chemist to bring his most powerful acids, and put it to his sharpest tests. And then, very likely, I should quietly sever its delicate tissues with my knife, and divide it into parts, that I might find out where its hidden vitality lies. Should I find out in any such way?

But if now, like a sensible man, I take this kernel of wheat and put it into the warm and congenial soil, where God meant it to unfold and manifest its hidden life, will it be long before I know whether it is living or dead? And could I, could any man, appreciate all the latent forces compressed within a single granule of wheat, or slumbering calmly within an acorn's rind, did he never look out upon an autumnal harvest or stand beneath the shelter of some knotted kingly oak of the forest? And how can one know anything about a religious doctrine, if first he ruthlessly tears it away from all soul contact and life experience, and examines it as an abstraction? My friends, it is not thus God's truth at all. It is but a faint prophecy, a mere seed-form of his great revelation. And not until that Christian

doctrine has blended its supernatural energies with the currents of an accountable human spirit, will it spring into its proportions of living beauty and demonstrate to all beholders its heavenly origin as the very power and wisdom of God. The way, then, to know religion, I now submit to you, is to know it practically, experimentally. And just so far as you and I know this gospel of the grace of God practically, personally, experimentally, do we truly know it, and no further. Hence our Saviour sent forth this challenge to the skeptics of his time and he proclaims the same to-day to every doubting, enquiring mind—"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

Reduced to its simplest terms, then, Christianity, the religion of Jesus Christ, is a rule of human life,—a divinely ordained way, showing how to live in this world and how to prepare for another. Its whole spirit and genius is intensely practical. It was given, not to gratify speculative curiosity, but first and foremost to teach men the path from earth to heaven.

The Bible, then, if you please, is a guide-book. But what is the office of a guide-book? You are traveling in a foreign land. Your long and tiresome route lies through a dangerous and, to you, wholly unfamiliar region. The people speak an unknown tongue. The habits and customs

of the country are all strange. At every step you are launched into some new perplexity. But a guide-book is put into your hand. All travelers unqualifiedly endorse it. It gives abundant and minute information concerning the journey you contemplate. You find in it an accurate and entertaining description of the way. It points out all objects of natural and historic interest. It gives you a careful list of the distances. It refers you to trustworthy couriers. It furnishes you the address of established and gentlemanly bankers. It describes the best modes of conveyance for the country, and the fittest wearing apparel for the climate. It points out the most friendly and homelike resting-places and hotels along the route. In short, it is a guide-book which for fulness of detail and accuracy of information leaves nothing to be desired to ensure you a pleasant, safe and profitable journey over the line of travel you propose to pursue.

But you are a skeptic, and taking up this guide-book, and glancing over it, you first complain that it is not a treatise on geology. Looking further, you next criticize it that it is not a systematic work on mental philosophy. Examining it closer, you find fault that it does contain a complete and exhaustive history of the peoples through whom the journey lies, with all their tribes and clans from the remotest time. Then, glancing forward over the route de-

scribed, you say, Here is a statement that seems unintelligible, and there is another statement which seems a discrepancy, and that assertion seems a mistake. Now, I ask, would that be fair and honest treatment of a guide-book? In all candor, are you not bound to judge the book by what it professes to be, and not by a gratuitous criterion of your own? And what would be a just method of verification? Would it not be to take the journey? And if, as you proceed, each fact is corroborated, each statement becomes intelligible, if you find it proving equal to every emergency, and if at the end of your journey you find not one misstatement in the book from beginning to end, not the omission of a single fact needed for the best prosecution of that journey, but in all respects the book is perfectly adapted to the end proposed,—then, I ask, by all the laws of reason and honor, whatever else the book may lack, are you not bound to endorse it as a complete and perfect guide-book?

Now, as I have already said, this Bible was not written to be a thesaurus of science. It was not put into our hands, as a race, primarily to teach us metaphysics. It never designed to disclose to mankind all the intellectual wonders in earth, air and sky. It never meant to teach universal history, or universal geography, or give a complete compendium of any human science. It was given to guide men to heaven.

And now, my friends, if honestly you wish to test its truth, *set out on the journey*. And if, at the end of your Christian course, you shall say, I found one defect, there is one palpable oversight in this book, one plain misapplication of means to ends, one point where the Bible fails to furnish ample and opportune help to the struggling human soul in getting the victory over sin and in safely reaching the gates of immortal life; if you will thus put the Bible to the test, and you then find such a defect, I say to you, you then will have a right solemnly to lay your hand on this book and say, "It is not the Word of God; it is a fable, a myth, a falsehood and a lure to the souls of men." But until you do thus put it to the test, you must allow me to say, you have no qualification and no right to sit in judgment on the truth or the untruth of the sacred Book.

But now, for a moment further, let me ask you to glance at another reason why any person without experimental acquaintance with these Scriptures is thereby unfitted to pass a safe intellectual judgment upon them—because the Bible has been written for our entire accountable nature. I need not remind you that the human soul is a creation of marvelous complexity, possessing the most diverse attributes and powers. Now if the contents of this Book appealed only to my reason, then my reason would be en-

tirely competent to pass judgment upon it. If a doctrine of Christ came to me just as a problem in mathematics comes to me, then my unassisted reason could deal with the solution, because the truths of mathematics make no appeal to my moral nature. They have no voice for my affections, my conscience, my hopes, my fears. They address one single faculty of my intellectual being. But religion, widely different, appeals to every faculty, and to every elemental power of my complex, spiritual manhood. I wish then to decide to-day, if possible, upon the claims of this *alleged* Word of God. Is it true or is it false? Plainly it is not enough that I now summon simply my reason to this great investigation. For my reason alone can interpret but a small part of this Book. No small part of these writings has directly to do with an alarmed conscience. No small part is specifically adapted to the wants of a human soul battling with trouble. Large portions of the volume find all their significance in stimulating the will. A part produces the fruits of regenerated character. A part is addressed to hope, a part to fear, a part to faith, a part to love. Clearly, if all my other *faculties* are dormant and reason only in exercise, I have but a very narrow premise on which to build up a conclusive judgment as to the Bible's adaptation to my whole spiritual nature.

In some of the old medieval castles and museums, the

modern traveler occasionally meets with a curiously constructed chest, or casket, originally designed to be the safe depository of some costly, perhaps a crown, jewel. The peculiarity of the construction is this: you open the casket, and within it, closely fitted, you find a second casket; you open the second, and within it you discover a third; you open a third, and, it may be, a fourth and a fifth, but in the last casket your eyes rest upon the dazzling and costly brilliant. Another peculiarity: each casket has its key. The key of the first will not open the second, the key of the second will not open the third; nor the the third the fourth, nor the fourth the fifth; each casket has its key and accidental misplacement or interchange fatally arrests all progress. Now, not wholly unlike this, have often seemed to me the hidden treasures of this divine Book. Bring to it your mere reason and you penetrate only the rind of Scripture. You strip off the mere husk of Bible truth, and there you must stop. But if now you can take up the key of a convicted conscience, that will strike deeper into the volume; if, then, the key of the religious sensibilities, that will open into other mines of truth; if then the key of fear, that unlocks another casket; if then of hope and then of faith, still other precious revelations; but, lastly, if you can seize the shining key of love, that will open you into the very arcanum of the gospel. And now upon your adoring and

awestruck vision will burst the central mystery of Christian revelation, *God's own Son on Calvary's cross*, dying for a guilty world! And is any man bold enough to tell me that he can understand this blessed Bible of mine with no love in his soul? Tell me you can interpret day without the sun, or night without the glory of the stars, but tell me not you can penetrate to the divine significance of this gospel of my Lord, after you have struck him and his love from the firmament of the Scriptures! Can reason interpret love? Look upon that mother's deathless affection for her child. If you are a brute and no man, can you understand it? If you look at that picture, with only a cold, dry, fiendish glance of intellect, but without a man's soul in your body, do you know anything about it? Can the five senses change places? Can the ear see? Can the eye hear? Can you judge of poetry with your organ of mathematics, or decide on a musical composition with your mere reflective powers? No more can the spiritual faculties interchange. Love only can interpret love. Now the gospel of God's grace to man is a *love gospel*. From beginning to end, it is tidings of love. Take love out of my gospel, and you have taken from me all the gospel I have. Take light out of day, and what is left?

And now, my fellow seeker after truth, think you to know Christ, the glory of his person, the power of his re-

ligion and the mystery of his grace, a total stranger to the only key that ever admitted any finite being to the innermost secret of God? No, not till in the depths of your soul you have felt your personal perishing need, and then out of your darkness and your despair have looked upon the uplifted and bleeding Christ as your Saviour—not till then have you any power to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height of that love which passeth knowledge!

Thus far I have made no allusion to any supernatural guidance of the human soul, in the great quest after religious truth. But is such a guidance unphilosophical? Is prayer irrational? Are those words of the apostle meaningless? "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." Did Christ simply mock his followers when he said, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, . . . even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." My dear friend, you are in perplexity, you are assaulted with doubts, on this whole subject of religion. Did it ever occur to you to take your Bible and in the solitude of a secret converse with the Father of your spirit ask help from One who never yet led any honest soul into darkness?

But, after all, I hear it said, there is so much conflicting testimony, so many different opinions about religion, and all apparently sincere; so many different views concerning the Bible, its origin, its inspiration, its infallibility, that really I know not what to believe. Very well, let us meet this new objection, and on its own ground. Turn we then to testimony, and we will receive the testimony of every qualified witness. We will receive the testimony of any and of all men who have tried the Bible, who have put the gospel of Jesus Christ to the test. Is not that fair? Now bring me one who shall say, "I have leaned my sin-burdened heart on Jesus as my Saviour and found him a deceiver." Bring me one who shall say, "I have taken this Bible as my life-counsellor, and it has proved a broken staff." Bring me one who shall say, "I have gone down into the valley of mortal anguish, and as the billows of affliction have rolled over me, with His promises in my hand I have looked to the heavens and they have been brass, and I have cried unto Him and his ear has been deaf." Out of all the ages point me to one martyr who has gone to the stake and Jesus has left him in the flames. Bring me one Christian hero who, as life's battles were ending and the film of death creeping over the gaze, even then has not been able to shout, with exultant Paul, "I know whom I have believed." My friend, in eighteen centuries bring

me one sinner prostrate at the cross of Calvary with a heart so vile and a guilt so black that Christ's blood could not cleanse him, and Christ's power could not lift him up, and put a song of everlasting joy upon his lips! Bring me one such witness to-day, and I yield you the argument. Nay, more, *I give up my Bible*; I trust it no longer. It has betrayed one human soul that has sincerely sought its light and its guidance. But until you do bring me this testimony, do not complain of me, do not call me unscientific and irrational, not abreast with modern thought, if I still cling to this old "Book of the Ages" as the sheet-anchor of my hope for this world and the next.

And now Christ says, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Could anything be simpler? Could anything be fairer? You honestly wish to know, my friend, if religion is a reality or a dream of over-excited brains. If the gospel of God's grace proffered to sinful men is true, it is able to make good promises of help and cleansing to the needy and perishing. Try it, try it, and you will know. And it is simply impossible for you truly to know, in any other way. But do not make a common mistake. Do not attempt to learn the lesson of Christ, beginning at the wrong end. Do not seek to enter the path to heaven by a side entrance. Christ points out the gateway, and he

declares that whoever enters elsewhere is "a thief and a robber." Begin with the simplest teachings first. You enter a schoolroom and before you sits a pupil with a discouraged and downcast face, poring over the last leaves of some book. Approaching his side, you find perhaps that here is a lad trying to master, it may be, arithmetic backwards. Instead of commencing at the beginning and with the simplest principles and mastering first addition and then subtraction and then multiplication and then division, he has begun at the very back end of the book, and with the hardest problems it contains. Is it any wonder that the lad is discouraged? But how many to-day are studying this great text-book, the Bible, filled with the lore of eternity, *in just this way*. They insist on solving all its hardest doctrines first. They insist that every mystery shall be explained to them, from Genesis to Revelation, before they will take the first step in the path of Christian duty. Now, I ask, is that reasonable? You say there are many things in the Bible you cannot understand. Very likely; but is there nothing you can understand? Then in heaven's name begin with that. If you cannot understand "election," try repentance. If you cannot understand the Epistle to the Romans, try the Sermon on the Mount. If you cannot comprehend the Trinity, see if you can comprehend Paul's words to the Philippian jailor: "Believe on the

Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." If the Apocalypse is still a sealed book, see if to-day the cry of the penitent, prostrate publican is intelligible to your lost and guilty soul: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And where you can understand, as you value your everlasting interests, there begin to learn and there begin to practice. And, my dear friend, you will go forward, light will break upon your path, scales will fall from your eyes, and more and more, as you proceed, will you behold wondrous things out of this Book. And at length you will make the discovery that all the truths of this Bible converge and have their radiant explanation in the marvelous life and death of God's redeeming Son.

But do not expect to understand all the mysteries. The Bible was not given for this, but to guide you to heaven. And if saved, some of these glorious and now fathomless mysteries will be your rapturous study and mine throughout eternity. But come now to Christ. Learn of him who is "meek and lowly in heart." Come with the spirit of a little child and not of a proud philosopher. Perhaps for years you have stood at the threshold of this Book; and you have stood there speculating, doubting, objecting, caviling. And, my friend, the summons of the Death Angel will find you just where you are to-day, unless you first come to Christ.

Oh, then, *begin at the cross!* Bow in blessed heart-surrender at His pierced feet, who died for you, and taste in the depths of your own forgiven soul the joys unspeakable of redeeming love. Then no more darkness, no more doubts, no more clouds, all the way up to the shining gate. And, at last, with thousands on thousands before you of victorious ones, now in glory, you too shall bear joyful testimony to the truth of these words of Christ, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

THE BIBLE: ITS PLACE AND POWER IN CHURCH AND STATE

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."—John
17: 17.

THE BIBLE: ITS PLACE AND POWER IN CHURCH AND STATE

All truth is fitted to accomplish some beneficent end. This is one of its tests; and by this we may distinguish it from falsehood. Truth is always self-agreeing and in harmony with the nature of things, while falsehood is self-discordant and in opposition to all right results. With reference to this well-known quality of truth we often say of a piece of perfect mechanism that one part is true to another, because all the parts work unclashingly together toward a common and useful end. Still oftener, we say of a painting or some work of art, that it is true to nature, meaning that its artistic laws and principles conform to the laws and principles of nature. But in a higher sense than we can speak of any material adaptations, may we say, there is an adaptation between all truth and the laws and nature of the human mind. The mind was made for truth and truth for the mind. It is the natural nutriment of mind, as food of the body. It is the instrumentality ordained of heaven, by which the human soul is to grow and ascend in the scale of moral intelligence.

All truth, in a degree, has this effect. There is truth in

the heavens above us which proclaim creating power. There is truth in the rainbow, the changing seasons, the light, the flower, the crystal, for they all speak of beneficence and beauty. There is truth in a mathematical problem. There is truth—more or less pure—in nearly every accredited system of science or philosophy now extant in our world. And all these truths have their legitimate effect on mind and character. But higher, and more than in them all, there is truth in the Word of God.

So far indeed do these Scriptures of divine revelation transcend all other systems or compends of truth, that our Saviour, when praying his Father to sanctify his followers through the truth, speaks of it as if it were the only truth: "Thy word *is* truth," as if in comparison with all else it might be called *truth itself*. Is this exaggeration? Did Christ overestimate the Scriptures? In other words, does the Bible or does it not, stand thus preeminent to-day, above all other embodiments or digests of truth, in adaptation to the human mind and soul? An attempt briefly to answer this question will outline and limit the present discourse.

In raising so important an inquiry, evidently it will greatly abridge our work if at the outset we can lay down one or two simple tests, which may be fairly applied to any body of truth in determining its relative importance. And

I think all will agree that the first requisite of any system of truth laying claim to high rank, would be that its central ideas and doctrines should be intrinsically noble and elevating. Without some degree of intellectual dignity, plainly no truth-system could assume high rank.

Again, another requisite of such a system would be, that its ideas should be of such a kind, and so presented, as to find a wide currency among men.

And a third requisite would be, that these ideas, when thus presented, should possess a power to influence mankind.

Here now are three tests: *grandeur of idea, wide popular adaptation, and power to influence men.*

And that we may fully grasp these tests at the start, let me now instance some schemes of thought where one or more of them would not apply, or very imperfectly. There are systems of philosophy, both ancient and modern, containing ideas and truths of remarkable profundity, acumen, erudition and intellectual sublimity, but which ideas and truths have no adaptation whatever to common minds.

To the mass of the people they are as an unknown tongue. Such, for example, was the old Platonic philosophy, the esoteric doctrines of ancient Egypt; and in the same category might be classed much of our modern transcendental and mystical literature. In some respects these

writings are remarkable for elevation of idea; yet were they never so perfect in this respect, they have no adaptation to popular currency.

Take now an instance where perhaps our first and second tests would apply, but not the third. I might here adduce many of the natural sciences. Select, if you please, the grandest of them all, astronomy—a science of the sublimest facts and the most inspiring intellectual principles, and which by a skilful exhibition of its main truths has now been wonderfully popularized, brought within the comprehension of nearly every schoolboy. Yet astronomy, sublime as it is as a science and system of truth, has never yet possessed sufficient moral power to reform a single human life. It would almost totally fail under our third test.

But without stopping to illustrate further, let us now bring the Bible at once face to face with this standard we have adopted:

I. The *intellectual dignity* of its contents.

And here our way is clear, for even skeptics, almost universally, have admitted its remarkable character in this particular, and while rejecting its inspired claims, have acknowledged its singular sublimity of thought and doctrine. Let us glance, then, hastily, at two or three

of the central ideas of the Bible as a body of systematic truth.

We will begin with that truth which must ever stand as the most distinctive feature in any religious system, the conception of the Supreme Being. The Bible is not alone in the fact that it recognizes a God. All pagan nations in some form or other have accepted this great belief, for the necessity of a God lies too deep in universal human consciousness, I must believe, to be wholly shut out from the processes of any intellect. Hence we say the Bible is not original in the *fact* that a Deity exists, but simply in the attributes and character with which it endows him.

Compare for one moment the Jehovah of the Bible with the gods of any heathen nation. Take, if you please, Greece and Rome at the height of their classic glory, the brightest examples of pagan intelligence. Take the loftiest creation of their imaginative philosophy, Jupiter, chief of the gods and central figure in the ancient mythology. But how infinitely does such a conception, with the loftiest adornments of poetry, fall beneath the sublime personality of the Christian's God, enthroned in the simple majesty of these Scriptures! The gods of heathendom at their best were but frail human nature exaggerated. Jove himself was but a colossal man.

And turning from the popular theology to the more

select philosophies of the past, we find but little advance. Plato himself, whose name is now well-nigh synonymous with lofty speculation, never reached the idea of *one self-existent God*. The Divine Being with him was but the embodiment of the forces of the world; a substance rather than a person, and over all, gods and men, still presided dark fate unintelligent and inexorable. And even modern pantheism, less than a generation ago the boasted capstone of modern infidel thought, and whose bold aim it was to crush the Bible itself beneath the wheels of its systematizing enginery, even German pantheism, at its highest flight of philosophic generalization, on this truth of a personal God, halted just where heathen Plato halted three thousand years ago; while modern positivism, its reactionary successor and supplanter to-day, falls immeasurably lower.

No fact then is more fully settled by universal human history, than that the world by its wisdom knows not God.

The idea of an omnipresent and personal Jehovah, the alone, infinite, eternal and self-existent Sovereign of all worlds, has never yet been attained by any unaided human intellect. There is but one seeming exception to this statement, and that is the Mohammedan Koran. Yet in this instance the evidence is beyond question, that the

truth of one God, contained in the Koran, was borrowed directly from the Jewish Scriptures.

While then polytheism and pantheism have been the product of mere philosophy, the Bible stands undeniably alone in the revelation of *one supreme, personal and infinite God, the executive and omnipresent Potentate of the universe*. And if this truth is original with the Bible, where in human composition will you find another to equal it?

But turn now to a second central Scripture truth. I refer you to the fact or conception of a *perfect earthly life* as unfolded in the recorded history of Jesus of Nazareth. Where else in literature will you point me to the portraiture of a *perfect* man? The world has had its heroes, and genius has striven to transcend reality and construct an ideal unity of manhood. The pencil of Apelles and the chisel of Phidias wrought through laborious years to awaken from the canvas and strike from the marble a perfect human form.

Shakespeare, the unparalleled in dramatic creation, has given the world characters that will never die from English literature. But in art or history, in the conceptions of genius or the realizations of actual conduct, where will you find a character and a life like that so artlessly sketched on the pages of this gospel? The representations of human literature at the best are but the virtues of an apostate and

depraved manhood; but here we have the authenticated and delineated instance of one earthly life which was sinless and perfect. Well then might Theodore Parker confess—himself prince of modern rationalists—“Only a Jesus could have forged a Jesus.”

Glance at one more central Bible truth and we leave this point, the *immortality of the human soul*. It may be claimed that outside the Bible men have held the soul's immortality. We admit that so strong is man's instinct for life, and his consciousness of a capacity for endless growth, that even pagan minds have cherished the conjecture that the soul in some form might endure forever. But how dim and unsatisfying the boldest conceptions of heathen wisdom, compared with the full and positive annunciation of this inspired Book! It may be safely affirmed that the Bible alone has brought “to light” life and immortality beyond the grave. The pen of Cicero indeed caught an unwonted eloquence as it discoursed on this lofty theme, yet how humiliating the fact that even that great intellect was obliged to confess that what he wrote was not as reliable as the Pythian Oracle. We count it an instance of sublime heathen calmness that Socrates could say to his judges, “I go to suffer death and you to enjoy life; the gods only know which is best.” How different this from that positive and exultant acclaim of the great apostle as he too

through martyrdom was going to his reward: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

Here now are three truths, the being of a God, the historic record of a perfect earthly life, and the immortality of the human soul. And we challenge any book, or all books together, ever written, in any and all ages, to produce *three* truths and prove them original, of equal intellectual grandeur and sublimity.

II. But I come now to our *second* test, *the wide adaptation of this Book to the popular mind*. Plainly, the most exalted system or syllabus of truths ever penned would be comparatively powerless if incapable of being understood. Sadly said the great German philosopher Hegel, near the close of his life, "Only one man in Germany understands me, and *he* misunderstands me." "It is impossible," said a Grecian sage, "to make God known to everybody." But just this very thing is what the Bible undertakes to do. And I unhesitatingly say that never was a book so wonderfully constructed to accomplish its purpose in this particular. This will be sufficiently evident, I think, if I bring to your notice two of its peculiarities; first, the *democracy of its spirit*, and second, the *popularity of its style*.

In the first place, never was a book so uncompromisingly democratic as this Book, or so profoundly sympathetic from cover to cover with universal humanity.

Indeed, this is the only book which has ever dared, in all ages and in all countries, practically and unflinchingly to assume the universal brotherhood of man, and sanction the teaching by the highest moral precept ever uttered in human ears: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And this great principle of universal "good will to men," I now say, first of all, guarantees the ultimate and universal domination of this Book round our globe.

But so familiar are we with this branch of the argument, in this democratic age and country, that I need not here prolong it.

I pass then to the second popular element of the Bible—its unrivalled literary character. It is often objected to the Bible by those who would weaken its authority, that its canonical contents embrace so wide a variety in subject-matter and style. In other words, it is put forward as a formidable argument against the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, that they have been composed through the agency of so many human writers, and during so long a period of time. But, on the other hand, I now press this very fact as one of the highest proofs we could possess that this Book is of superhuman authorship.

Why is it, I ask, that the follower of Mohammed relies so much upon his sword and so little upon the Koran for the popular spread of his faith? Other reasons indeed he has, but had he no other, this would be sufficient, that the Koran has no literary fitness to be universally read. Its one unvarying style of stilted stateliness and sing-song monotony soon becomes intolerable even to its devoutest admirer. Is it not then a mark of divine wisdom that the Bible is the joint product of not less than forty different human authors, each leaving his individual impress upon it? And while the whole is so wonderfully compact as to form but a single volume of medium size, it contains every possible variety of literary style and intellectual composition. History, poetry, morals, philosophy, dialogue, proverb, narrative, apothegm, are all here; and not only every species of discourse, but every key of emotional style, the sublime, the tender, the profound, the contemplative, the plainest practicality, and the rhythm of highest revelation. Do you love the grand in thought and imagery? Turn to the lofty verse of Isaiah, or to the cloud-shadowed drama of Job. Let Jehovah himself appear, and speak to murmuring man from the whirlwind. Or is your mood rather for the pensive? Jeremiah sweeps his dirgeful harp as he weeps in musical sadness for the slain of the daughters of his people. Do you love simple and affecting

narrative? Read the beautiful story of Ruth, the parable of the prodigal son, or join the grief of David as he weeps over the untimely death of Absalom. Do you love concise and graphic history? The book of Genesis is a model. Do you delight in terse and sparkling apothegm? Open to the royal pages of Solomon. Do you love argument and profound dissertation? Grapple with the masterly dialectics of Paul. Or is your taste yet severer? Sit at the feet of Moses and peruse that wonderful body of jurisprudence which had its birth amid the flames of Sinai. Is poetry your delight? Herein is every variety; whether with the lyric Psalmist you would wander by Judæa's streams and sunny pastures, or on the wing of grander epic, wander down the stream of apocalyptic vision, till across abysmal centuries and from behind clouds vocal with retributive thunders and fringed with symbolic fires, shall arise at length on the Orient of the distant future the jasper battlements and the pinnacled glories of the New Jerusalem. And it is this marvelous literary diversity, I now say, under a divine unity of inspiration, that forms the wonder of the Bible: that while in the great orchestra of revelation is every type of performer, there is still a centrality of utterance, for under the finger of the directing Spirit the notes of all blend in one master-chord of redemptive truth; and while it is Paul, Isaiah, John, Matthew, Moses, we read, it is still the Word of God.

III. But I hasten to the application of our third and last test: Is the Bible a book of *power*? Our argument has already embraced *elements* of power; it remains, therefore, but to glance in a few brief points at some of their outward and historic manifestations. As was said at the beginning, it is possible for a system of truth to be both grand in its intellectual conception, and wide in its popular adaptation, and yet possess but a feeble moral power.

What, then, has experiment shown of the Bible in this respect? Take first its power of mere *existence* or *self-perpetuation*. That is certainly no mean property of truth, or of a system of thought, which enables it to *endure* age after age with unimpaired supremacy and unity. No book can parallel the Bible in this respect. Without external aid, by an intrinsic moral force, it has met and outlived an array of opposition before which any other book, ages since, would have become extinct.

I will not now speculate on the causes, whether philosophical or miraculous, which preserved intact and uncorrupt the Jewish Scriptures through so many ages of national calamity and vicissitude. The fact is indeed a phenomenon in literature. But it is when we come to the New Testament, with *its* doctrines and body of historic truth, that we find the most marked exemplification of moral power. Protected by no human authority, assisted neither

by art nor eloquence, its Author put to death as a malefactor, yet the teachings of twelve men, poor, friendless, illiterate, spread with a rapidity and power never before witnessed in the annals of time. In a single year after the death of Christ, his disciples numbered ten thousand. In two years, the crucified faith overran Judæa. In less than a century, it pervaded northern Africa, the whole of Asia Minor, and no small part of Europe. In three centuries Christianity sat in the throne of the Cæsars, and Rome, proud mistress of the world, bowed to the standard of the cross. It has survived the ecclesiastical apostasy of the middle ages. Once and again it has warred knife to knife with a relentless atheism sworn to its extermination. And what is its position to-day on the face of the globe? "In the nineteenth century," said Voltaire, "the Bible will be an obsolete book." The very room, we are told, in which that sentence was penned, in the city of Geneva, but recently was packed to its ceiling with Bibles, to be distributed throughout Switzerland.

But not only has this Book perpetuated itself, it has exerted a positive *political* influence. "There are no politics," says Milton, "like those in the Bible," for there is no book which strikes so directly at the foundation of all true government, the self-government of the individual. Indeed, it is from this Book that the world has received its first just notions of human liberty.

An old Latin copy of the Scriptures, deposited in the library at Erfurt, some three hundred years ago fell in the way of a young Augustinian monk. From a diligent study of that old volume, he arrived at a conviction of the following truths: "the right of private judgment, and the soul's individual responsibility to God." At the torch of that discovery was kindled the genius of Martin Luther and the reformation of the sixteenth century. And to Luther and his successors in ecclesiastical reform is the world indebted for its first great suggestion in solving the problem of civil liberty. An eminent political writer has declared John Calvin to be the founder of the American republic. The remark was made with no reference to his peculiar theology, but simply because in that independent and Biblical church at Geneva, composed chiefly of Puritan refugees, were first developed in bold statement, by a master mind, the rights of opinion and freedom of conscience.

And it was to these men, as Hume confessed, bitterly as he hated their religiousness of life, that England was indebted for all the liberty in her constitution. And the more eloquent Macaulay has written: "Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles which have since worked their way into the depths of the American forest, have roused Greece from the slavery of two thousand

years, and from one end of Europe to the other have kindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed."

And, my friends, believe it, this free Protestant Bible, to-day, more than all other forces beneath the sun, is steadily preparing the way for the downfall ultimately of the last fabric of political despotism that now curses this earth. A book that has thus shaped the destinies of nations must have no ordinary *intellectual* character. Take a single illustration on this point. An obscure fisherman on the lakes of Palestine wrote a short treatise which now covers less than five octavo pages. One of the most gifted scholars England ever produced spent years of intense and learned labor in developing and enforcing the ideas of that brief document. And we are told that these same epistles of Peter furnished even the splendid genius of Coleridge with many of those aphorisms which form the basis of his celebrated "Aids to Reflection."

Philosophy has bowed reverently before the Bible. Sheridan confessed that he owed to it nearly all his eloquence, and it is one of the four volumes which Byron said he never suffered to be absent from his table. And yet, not with scholars or philosophers has this book wrought its proudest intellectual results. It has awakened the common mind. It is the book of the masses and the

charter of their hopes. Religion and education landed hand in hand on Plymouth Rock. The college for the people and the sanctuaries of God went up together on New England's hills.

The Bible and the system of common schools were then united in a vital union, and the vandal hand to-day aiming a blow at the one, believe it, would fain drive a dagger to the heart of the other. The spirit which would now make God's Word contraband in our schools is a lying spirit, for behind the thinnest disguise of patriotism burns a smouldering fire of undying ecclesiastical hate to the whole genius of our American republicanism; and the blow leveled ostensibly at this Book, is leveled not at this, but at Protestant liberty itself, which now saturates through and through all our education, all our literature, all our institutions. A friend of Rufus Choate, examining the private library of that great lawyer, expressed surprise that while he found upon his shelves not a single copy of the Constitution, he found there not less than seven different editions of the Greek Testament. "Ah," said Mr. Choate, "you forget that the Constitution of my country is in every one of them." And it is the Constitution of this "land of the free," guaranteeing equal rights of person and conscience to all, and whose spirit lies embedded and glowing on every page of this divine Book, that is now exciting all

the implacable ire of Rome's priestly servants over this broad continent.

And if we go on, brethren, as for twenty-five years, in craven concession to this insatiate foreign power on our home soil, when our next American centennial returns, our children and our children's children will gather only to write an epitaph on the gravestone of American liberty. God in his mercy avert the danger, and awaken us betimes to the wiles of that old foe of constitutional liberty, ready to spring at our vitals the very moment she has the power!

This Book dangerous, do they tell us? Dangerous to what? Only to ignorance and injustice; only to the secret cabals of tyranny, spiritual and secular.

This Book sectarian? Then is God's sunshine sectarian; then is the Infinite Spirit that dictated it; then is the Christ incarnate, revealed on its almost every page, the only hope and Saviour of our race, and who said to his followers: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" then is the God and Father universal, of whom the whole family in earth and heaven is named, and who has declared that his word shall stand for ever—a sectarian God!

But we are gravely informed in these latter days, that this Book, unrestricted in its dissemination and reading, puts a shackle on certain freeborn human consciences; more than

this, puts in deadly peril certain inalienable spiritual rights, and everlasting interests of the God-begotten and God-accountable human soul. Did not such a charge fall to pieces under the simple weight of its own absurdity, it would be a pure blasphemy hurled into the face of Him who is the author both of the human soul, and of this infallible Word of infinite wisdom and grace published to his human children. This Book a conspirator against human rights! a foe to soul liberty! whose single mission down all the ages, it can now be historically demonstrated, when itself free and unmanacled, has been only to enfranchise consciences, unbar prison doors, and let oppressed souls everywhere go free! And shall we in this nineteenth Christian century, go back on all history, and become an unprotesting party to the monstrous lie that this divine Book, untrammelled by church or priest, and left to ray out simply its own heaven-born beauty and power, ever has, or ever can be an ally and tool of religious intolerance and sectarian oppression? Falsest of falsehoods ever invented by the father of falsehood!

But there are different versions, it is said, and there is a choice. *Let there be a choice if it comes to that.* But in God's name, let us not scuttle his own ark, launched upon this sin-deluged world, and atheistically and suicidally send it to the bottom of the sea, freighted with the very salva-

tion of humanity, because we chance to have a choice in the *key* with which to unlock its door and stand within its glorious apartments of refuge and hope!

But I must not linger, for I am reminded that there is yet a power of this Book in the presence of which all that we have said sinks into eclipse. We have admired the temple; its matchless exterior; we have not yet penetrated to its Holy of holies, and unveiled the very glory of the Shekinah. And what finite words can measure the *religious* power of this sacred volume? What mortal hand can unveil the energies of one human soul, or paint the conquest of one life redeemed forever unto God? And for eighteen centuries Christianity has been repeating its miracles of grace. It has wiped the tear from the cheek of penitence, poured light and hope into the bosom of despair, and robbed of its grim hideousness earth's last terror; and now in this missionary age it is belting the globe with paths of light. The isles of the sea have learned the song of deliverance. Across the dark plains of Africa the chorus is rolling. Even from within the walls of the celestial empire itself, which for ages seemed the last entrenchment of error, praise is beginning to ascend unto the name of Jesus.

And when the whole world is opening to this Book, shall we, in Bible-founded and God-saved America, put

it in chains, and in the face of all heathendom, by solemn state enactment, brand into its shining cover the words "sectarian" and "contraband"?

But let us come to the question. Is the Bible a book of power? Is the Bible *still* a book of power? or is it, as some would have us believe, already antiquating, fast losing its hold on the advancing intelligence of mankind, and ere long to be entirely superseded and shelved before a higher wisdom? Was Christ, or was he not really philosophical in the prayer and in the argument, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"? My friend, I beseech you, do not evade the issue; for in my judgment this is the key position of the whole battle now waging between modern faith and unfaith: Can you match the Bible under either of the three tests to which we have now applied it, with any other book or system of truth beneath the sun?

And if this Book is indeed *God's Book*, if more perfectly than any other it is framed to the mind and heart and soul of man, here and hereafter, then I say the Christian believer and the Christian patriot needs to return to a more intelligent and hearty reverence for it. If it is the divinely appointed instrumentality for the world's regeneration, then it is the Bible above all other instrumentali-

ties; it is the Bible first and highest in our pulpits; it is the Bible first and foremost in our Sabbath services; it is the Bible above philosophy, above and before moral reforms, above and against priestly dictation; yes, my brethren, it is this blessed volume of God, broadcast, free, unfettered and unproscribed as the very air and light which flood the sky, in which are centered the hopes of humanity, the hopes of the true Church of God, the hopes of this American republic. It is more to us than the palladium of Greece. It is more to us than the mystic ensign of imperial Constantine. It is more to us than the enchanted drum of the Bohemian Ziska, which, wherever it went, led to victory, for its ringing music marshaled again the shades of departed heroes, who assembled, an invisible host, to fight again the battles of their country. But where goes this Book goes a mightier than mortal ally, even the Spirit and power of the living God.

It is his truth, and he will honor it. It shall not return unto him void. The missiles of error and infernal hate shall fall harmlessly at its feet. Nor shall it accomplish its divine mission until earth's redeemed thousands are gathered on the mount of praise above.

HOW TO BEGIN TO BE A CHRISTIAN

"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." — Mark 9: 24.

HOW TO BEGIN TO BE A CHRISTIAN

While our Saviour was apart with his three favored disciples in the mount of Transfiguration, an afflicted father, we learn from the gospel narrative, brought his child, possessed of an evil spirit, to the disciples who remained at the foot of the mountain, and besought them to cast out the evil spirit. This, however, they were not able to do; and on our Saviour's return from the mountain, the distressed father directed his appeal to him. "If thou canst do any thing," is his prayer to Christ, "have compassion on us, and help us." Then Christ answered, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Evidently a fierce struggle was going forward in that father's breast between faith and doubt. He had just seen the disciples baffled in their attempts to work the miracle. Probably by the hearing of the ear, if not by actual sight, he was already in possession of some evidence of the Saviour's divine character; yet that evidence, he painfully felt, was incomplete. His faith wavered. But his case was most urgent. A father's heart was bound up with the cure he

sought. From Christ's own lips he now learns that the exercise of faith within his own breast is the only hope for his wretched child; and the terrible apprehension flashes upon him, that possibly he may fail of success at just this vital point, namely, want of sufficient confidence put forth by himself in Christ's power to effect the cure.

With an anguished heart, then, and his eyes brimming with tears, he takes refuge in prayer, and casts himself upon the condescending grace and mercy of Christ: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," as if he had said, "I do have a glimmer of confidence; I do possess a spark of faith; kindle thou that spark into a flame. By thy sovereign power perfect what is lacking in my soul; 'help thou mine unbelief.' Give me the victory over it, and let no faithlessness of mine, I beseech thee, stand between me and the glorious boon I crave." And the gracious Saviour heard that prayer, and the blessing was not withholden.

No truth, my friends, is written more conspicuously, on nearly every page of the gospel, than that only by the exercise of belief or trust in Christ as the only Saviour of men, can any needy human soul receive forgiveness and the redemptive favor of heaven. "He that believeth . . . shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," was Christ's own clear enunciation of this great truth. And again: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only be-

gotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," was an apostle's only direction to a trembling sinner of old.

In a word, then, *belief* now stands forth ordained of heaven as the only medium of reunion between a holy God and apostate man—the only channel through which spiritual blessings can now flow down into any needy human heart.

An act or exercise of the human soul, exalted to such prominence as belief is everywhere exalted in the Scriptures, evidently deserves our most careful analysis and consideration. What, then, are we to understand as *gospel faith*? What is saving belief or confidence in Christ? In other words, what degree or measure of trust must a needy and yearning human heart put into exercise towards the Redeemer of sinners, before it may feel authorized humbly and tremblingly to say, "Lord, I believe," and thus plead the promise of divine forgiveness and help?

It is plain that this question touches a vital center in all gospel teaching, and is of the utmost experimental importance to every heaven-seeking soul.

As a preparatory step towards reaching the answer we seek, let me now observe that nothing will be more obvious to every reflecting mind than that genuine faith

may exhibit the widest phases of difference in respect to strength and fervor, not only in different souls, but also in the same soul at different stages of its spiritual history. True belief may range all the way from the faintest and feeblest glimmer of trust that ever entered a despairing mind, up to the loftiest and most unquestioning assurance that ever opened heaven's glories to a dying Christian.

Thus one of the most familiar teachings of the Bible is, that faith or grace in the heart is a *growth*. "The path of the just," we are told, "is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Faith may begin in the soul like the earliest glint of morning on the eastern sky; it may end like the cloudless meridian sun, bathing the round world in light.

To expect the same completeness of belief, or distinctness of religious experience, in a new-born heart that we expect in a mature Christian, would be as unphilosophical as to look for the same intelligence or muscular vigor in an infant that we look for in a man. Religion in the soul is a thing of degrees, and faith, wherever truly existing, exists under a law of development. When the God of heaven gives the command to a sin-laden and Satan-enslaved human heart, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," he certainly cannot employ the word "*believe*" with the most absolute and unlimited signification

possible to attach to that word, for such a command would be simple mockery given to such a soul. Neither can he intend to say "believe" as an angel in heaven might believe, or as a redeemed spirit a thousand years in glory might believe, or even as an unfallen human spirit might believe. *But believe—how?* As a poor, weak, ignorant, tempted and fallen human heart may believe. Come to Jesus with all the confidence you can summon; come to him, and come boldly, with all the faith you have to give, be it much or be it little; and then before his cross send up the cry, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Let us proceed to turn our attention for a moment to two things which of necessity must ever modify the exercise of faith or belief in a finite and sinful human heart.

First, let us look at faith or belief as related to *knowledge* or mere intellectual apprehension of divine things. None will deny, I think, that the more intellectual knowledge and insight one has gained respecting any object or person claiming his faith, other things being equal, the broader and more solid a foundation he will have laid for the exercise of unwavering belief in that person or object. For example, turning again to the case of this afflicted father who came to Christ for the healing of his son, it is clear that the more ocular demonstration that father already had of Christ's power as a healer, and the more

knowledge already in his possession of the Saviour's divine character, the more reasonably he might be expected and required to exercise at that time unquestioning confidence in his miraculous ability.

Now, my friends, we need constantly to remember that the gospel of Jesus Christ comes into this lost world, bringing its "glad tidings of great joy," not simply or primarily to the learned, the educated, the intellectual giants of our race, but just as much to the poor, the illiterate, the feeble-minded; just as much to little children as to the profoundest theologians. When a wretched and ignorant human soul, then, feels its need of Christ, and gropes its trembling way towards his cross, and there tries to exercise saving belief in his glorious power, it would be merely absurd for us to expect that that soul should instantaneously arrive at a full intellectual comprehension of the whole scheme of Christian theology; that at once it should be able to solve all the theoretical mysteries of the Christian religion. When, in process of time, it stands up in the house of God publicly to confess its crucified Saviour before men, we are not to expect or require that that babe in Christ shall understand speculatively all about the Trinity, or shall have mastered all the formal articles of a church creed, or shall be able to explain election metaphysically, or draw precisely the line between free will and divine sovereignty, or

that it shall be able to define even the atonement in accurate theological formula, or even the person of the blessed Lord himself in all his mysterious functions as both a divine and human Saviour. Enough, we say, if a glimmer of comprehension of these momentous and blessed truths has entered that sin-darkened heart, and led it to Jesus, and Jesus has received it, and washed away its guilt in his own blood; it is not for us to assume to reject that Christ-accepted soul. We do well, I think, sometimes to heed those remarkable words of the Master: "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea."

Knowledge of divine truth, then, we must not forget, is progressive. Faith ever increases by a law of its own divine unfolding. If God's daylight has truly dawned in a human soul, we need have no fear that the sun will not mount higher and higher towards the zenith of perfect day.

Again, look for one moment at faith as modified by *feeling*; or to use a better term perhaps in this connection, *personal experience*. Writers on the Christian evidences ordinarily divide the subject, as is well known, into two great departments—the external and the internal proofs of Christianity. The former is the realm chiefly of intellectual per-

ception; the latter the realm chiefly of inward consciousness, or personal experience.

Now no one need be told that when a sinner first comes believingly to Christ, he then only begins his Christian experience; that he then only glances, as it were, at the title-page of the great volume of redemptive love put into his hands, and which is to be his lifelong study. Each day of the pilgrimage he is to turn a new leaf, and read a new chapter of his Saviour's personal grace to him; and not until the last day of his earthly life will he turn the last leaf and close the volume; and if then an aged, rejoicing saint, standing on the brink of the grave, one should ask him what was his ground of confidence in Christ as a Saviour, he would turn to that closed Book, and say, "Every page, all the way through, has been only an added testimony to deepen in my soul the conviction of my Saviour's divinity and the truth of his blessed gospel."

Or, to change the illustration, the Christian life is as one climbing a mountain. He begins in the depths of the valley, where the mists are heavy and the sun-rays well-nigh excluded. As gradually he ascends, the light increases and the view widens. An opening appears in this direction and the other through the range; and thus he toils upward, conquering slowly this and that overshadowing peak, until at last his feet are planted on the very topmost summit.

And now what a scene opens before him! Glorious landscapes far as the eye can reach, and on every side the far-circling horizon without a cloud or an obstruction! On such a sun-bathed mountaintop, I ween, that old apostle stood as we hear him ring out in that far-back century his pæan of victory, "I know whom I have believed!"

Thus, my friends, from the beginning to the end of the race does faith in every truly regenerate heart grow stronger and brighter from the ever-widening horizon of knowledge and experience.

If this point may be taken as settled, that faith is in all cases a variable and progressive exercise of the regenerate soul, let us now turn back for a moment to contemplate yet more carefully the *commencement* of faith or belief in a sinful heart, as affected by the indwelling power of sin in that heart; or in other words, by the habit of unbelief already fixed and rooted in that soul. You will not be surprised, I am sure, to hear it said that unbelief may become a habit with a man, just as any other mental exercise may grow and ripen into a habit. Thus one may acquire a habit of skepticism, and by no means is it a difficult thing to do. How often do we hear one in middle life saying, "Oh, that I had the simple-heartedness, the unsophisticated and undoubting belief in religious things that I had in childhood or boyhood! But there seems now a great gulf between me and

any possibility of my becoming a Christian. I have outgrown my early habit of trustfulness. I do not wholly and unqualifiedly reject the Bible; I do not positively renounce Christianity as a revealed system of truth; but I am filled with doubts; I am tormented with unbelief; I am haunted by a kind of chronic distrust of all the religious truths I now hear advanced. It was not so once, but it is so to-day; and for that reason belief, saving belief, in my case, appears well-nigh a moral impossibility."

My friend, your case is not a singular one, nor a surprising one. For years you have resisted light; you are suffering the penalty. When you have known the truth of heaven, you have not received it as the truth of heaven. When you have known God, you have not glorified him as God, neither have been thankful. He has therefore retributively suffered your understanding to be darkened. But what is now to be done? You cannot annihilate the past; you cannot undo instantly all the wrong-doing of years. By a single act of volition you cannot now, in a moment's time, drive out of your abused soul all the owls and bats of unbelief that so long have haunted your thoughts and imagination; and on the other hand, it does not now lie within your moral ability instantly to *will* into exercise an unwavering belief in all the truths of Christianity. You cannot in an instant's time will into exercise, for example,

perfect love towards God, or full-orbed and absolutely unquestioning confidence in Christ; or by a single act of will fill your soul this moment with an all-absorbing and all-prostrating penitence before your injured Maker. These things, I say, are not now possible. But let me tell you what is possible. You can take the preparatory steps to all this, and you can take those steps instantly. You cannot *will* yourself this instant at the top of a high mountain; but you can instantly will and commence a series of steps which will at length take you there.

What if the United States and Canadian governments, when contemplating a suspension-bridge across Niagara river, had taken the famous engineer of that work, Mr. Roebling, to the river's brink, and said, "Sir, span at once this yawning chasm with a highway hung in mid air, yet so strong that loaded railway trains may cross it in perfect safety." He might have justly replied, "The command, as now given, is impossible; but grant me my own method and time, and the work may be accomplished." And what was his own method? First, a common kite was sent into the air, with an ordinary twine attached; to this twine was affixed a small wire; to this wire a larger wire; to this larger wire, at length, bands and beams and cables of twisted iron; until finally the majestic aerial structure arched the river from shore to shore.

My unconverted friend, as God's minister, I do not now ask you to span that terrible gulf of unbelief that yawns between your guilty soul and an injured God, with a faith as strong as Moses had when, the wilderness crossed, he stood on Mount Pisgah, or a faith as strong as Paul had, when, the race ended, he could look straight into glory: but I ask you to go to Christ with what confidence you have, and to go to him *instantly*. If there be in your heart to-day the faintest, feeblest flicker of a desire to know the pardoning love of Jesus, let that faint desire become, if nothing more, the insignificant string first to cross the river. Perhaps you say you are beset with fierce temptations—tossed hither and thither on a sea of skepticism. Then go to Christ, as Peter went, on the water; and as you too sink beneath the waves, cry out with Peter's earnestness, "Lord, save, or I perish!"

Have you seen a song-bird in a storm, seeking its nest in the coronal of some lofty tree? With what heroic patience the tempest is braved; mounting upward only to be beaten back and back again, yet struggling forward, until the bending, swaying branch is reached; and then with what triumphant tenacity does the little conqueror cling to its resting-place, though rocked by the storm; and now, perhaps, in the very teeth of the tempest, sends up a note of sweetest music to blend with the howling of the gale!

So do you, sin-tossed one, seek the only shelter for your lost soul; and in the very face of Satan's buffetings, send up into the bending ear of Jesus that trembling but ever-conquering cry of trust, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"

Let me close with a few words of application to two classes of persons.

First, those who have not yet found Christ, but confess to *some* desire, however faint, savingly to know him. I ask you to go at once to the cross. But you say you are not in a fit frame of mind or heart to seek religion now; you need preparation; you need a stronger faith. But I say to you, Go to Christ with what faith you have; ask him for more, and see if you are denied. But, you still respond, I have not the depth of religious feeling I ought to have. Then with an old English preacher I say again, "If you cannot go to Christ on feeling, go to him on principle." In short, if there be one uncalloused spot in your soul to-day, one hallowed memory of childhood, one link between you and hope, one vulnerable joint in the harness where a shaft of God's Spirit may enter your heart; if you have a wish even to be a Christian; if merely your judgment and reason as yet are on the side of God and heaven and eternity—then make the most of that; let that be the first stepping-stone out of the terrible slough of your condemna-

tion, the first round in the ladder by which you may mount upward towards hope and life eternal. Your judgment and reason, you confess, are on the side of God and Christ and heaven.

Well, then, if your judgment and reason tell you to-day that religion is important, they tell you one thing more—that it is more important than anything else and all things else in the wide universe besides. Will you suffer, then, from my lips a simple suggestion? Resolve that for one week to come, you will devote at least one half-hour daily to honest meditation upon the subject of your personal salvation. Here and now resolve that, for that allotted period, no thought whatever shall come between your reason in its intensest exercise and this most momentous of themes possible for you to consider; and then see if, before the week shall end, some awakening sense of your soul's fearful peril beneath the frown of a just God shall not drive you to bended knee, and wring from your now prayerless lips the agonized question of one of old, "What shall I do to be saved?"

A single word, in closing, to another class. Some I may now address who are humbly hoping that they have already begun to trust and follow the Saviour of sinners. Remember then, dear friends, if truly you have entered the upward road, Jesus must be the "*Finisher*" as well as the

"*Author*" of your faith. Think not the conflict ended, but only begun, when at the cross you have found forgiveness. Think not to lay your armor off until at last the victor's crown, by the Master's hand, is on your brow. Be not discouraged if in your earlier experiences do not appear all the fruits of ripened discipleship. Go forward; light will increase and faith will strengthen. Be not disheartened if there come days of darkness, when feeling is fickle and hope is faint; all the closer cling to the Master's side. Be not distressed if at first you do not experience all that overpowering sense of guilt you had anticipated. Follow Jesus, and more and more you will know yourself. Go up stream, and you will soon feel the power of the current. Strive to live an earnest and consistent Christian life in this ungodly world, and ere long you will unmistakably discover the power of a desperately wicked heart within. Moreover, remember this, if truly converted, *conviction of sin*, conscious heart defilement before a holy God will increase to your dying hour. But go forward; "press toward the mark for the prize;" and in every season of temptation, until the goal is reached and faith has ended in sight, let this be the battle-prayer of your upward march: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF PLY-
MOUTH CHURCH, WORCESTER

MAY, 1894

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF
PLYMOUTH CHURCH, WORCESTER. May, 1894.

Down by the sea, overlooking the bay where the Pilgrims landed, stands a magnificent monument erected by this reverent nation some generations ago in honor of these remarkable men, and largely descriptive of their great work in history. Into the foundations alone of this stupendous structure were put fifteen hundred tons of granite. Upon the four corners of its broad pedestal were placed four symbolical figures, Law, Freedom, Education, Morality, while surmounting the whole is the largest granite statue in the world—a colossal figure of Faith holding in one hand an open Bible, and with the upraised forefinger of the other pointing this nation to God. Would that that “sermon in stone” might instruct and warn the descendants of the Pilgrims to the latest generation!

By the invincible heredity of its moral ideas Plymouth Rock has at length underpinned this continent, and for centuries to come, God helping us, shall remain the front doorstep of our whole American civilization. Upon a splinter of this old rock twenty-five years ago was planted this church, whose anniversary we now celebrate, and

which in its first brief quarter-century of existence, by the great favor of God, has marvelously underpinned and undergirded Worcester with moral and spiritual power.

Is it not now too late for any nation to forget that it is never safe to cut the umbilical tie between morality and religion, faith and life, the highest weal for this world, and for the next? Our esteemed friends of the old mother church, but who still prefer to import both their theology and their ecclesiasticism from the banks of the Tiber, utter warnings loud and long in our ears against the peril of "godless schools" among us, as they choose to call them. But let me say to these excellent, and I must believe truly patriotic gentlemen, if possible to allay their fears, that a "godless school" is henceforth and forever impossible in a land that began with Plymouth Rock and remains true to its ancestral traditions.

Like the monument there by the sea, so this church for twenty-five years has put into the hands of Christian faith God's open and unmutilated Book and held it up in the sight of all men. For this period this church has raised no crops, minted no money, woven no cloth, drawn no wire, constructed no looms, built no railroads, enacted no laws, administered no courts, taught no schools or universities, and declared no dividends to its pew-holders, payable in checks that any sane bank would cash. And yet

for these years this church, I am now bold to say, by fulfilling its one transcendent function of divine teaching, has added to the wealth of this city beyond the power of any board of trade or stock market to compute; indeed, from the beginning has been as the very ozone of God sweeping down from the celestial heights, to distend the nostrils, strengthen the heart, and redden the blood of our whole municipal prosperity.

In recognition of this high public service, this united city by its representatives now meets to pay it honor. In this brilliant clerical symposium I see around me, my honored brother, Dr. McCullagh, the pastor of this church, I suppose has introduced about every color of the denominational prism, with the hope of centering at last one pure white beam of theological glory upon this occasion. Indeed, since the "parliament of religions" at Chicago last year, it must be acknowledged that the religious world seems a good deal thrown into "pi" along mere dogmatic lines. In fact my own theological pedigree has always been a good deal mixed. My father was a Universalist, I was brought up with a Unitarian uncle, I was converted among the Methodists, I joined a Congregational church, and I graduated at a Presbyterian theological seminary, and my friends, the Baptists, for whom I have preached a good deal, are kind enough to say if I only had a little more

water-front to my Biblical exegesis I could pass muster with them!

Evidently, then, we meet to-night in a spirit of large brotherliness, so far as mere credal straight-jackets are concerned. But I do most earnestly hope, let me say, that we can all now stand together upon the platform of this Book, if not as a doctrinal rampart, yet as the one peerless ethical manual and the one flawless text-book for the spiritual culture of our race. Matthew Arnold puts the Bible incomparably above all other books as "a book of conduct," and I am ready to let it stand or fall by that test. If there is any more potent and self-luminous script on this planet to lift men Godward, I want to find it. If there is any grander force under all God's skies than this New Testament of Jesus the Christ, when translated into daily human living, to eliminate sin and sorrow ultimately from this footstool, I want to find it. Colonel T. W. Higginson, addressing the world's fair last autumn on "The Sympathy of Religions," in faultless elocution and golden English told his polyglot audience, that for us in America, the door out of sin and superstition was called "Christianity," but it was only a historical name, the mere "accident of a birth-place," while other nations had other "outlets," he assured them, equally safe and inviting; and with a dash of rhetorical rose-water right and left, over heathendom in general,

he retired from the platform in a blaze of millennial eloquence. But does not Colonel Higginson know, as every scholar knows, that Buddhism as a moral force, a social regenerator in the Orient, has been absolutely dead for more than two thousand years? While beginning with an ideal of reform almost Christlike in its self-abnegation and beautiful charity, it has degenerated into meaningless mummeries until now it does absolutely nothing to exalt and beautify human life. Does not this graceful orator further know that Confucius, whose ethics he so admires, never spoke one generous word for woman, whose eloquent modern champion he himself is? Does he not know that not one Chinese temple on our whole Pacific coast, ever uttered one protest against Chinese prostitution, the most intolerable moral stench now entering the nostrils of high heaven on our Western shore? Does he not know that all the leading Hindoo sects agree to-day perfectly on two points—the sanctity of the cow and the depravity of woman? When William H. Seward came back from his trip around the world he said, "All Asia has not a home." I ask, then, can the red cross of Clara Barton, with its ear to the ground, to catch the first outcry of human distress beneath the wide canopy, can the white cross of Frances E. Willard, preaching "A White Life for Two," can these magnificent women and their fellow workers, the crowning

moral fruitage of nineteen luminous Christian centuries, now give no points to the Orient on the place of woman in an ideal Christian home?

I appeal, then, from Colonel Higginson to Matthew Arnold, and say that this round globe wants the best "Book of Conduct" extant beneath all God's star-lighted dome, and it is the duty of Christian America to give it as speedily as possible to the peoples that now sit in darkness!

And now by this same ethical test I abide at home. What are our churches doing for our city and for humanity at large? "By their fruits ye shall know them," said the great Teacher. Let us honestly face this winnowing challenge that confronts every church and every disciple. For many years I have ranked myself with orthodox believers and preachers. But I want the best faith extant—the most vitalized, outworking and surcharged with heavenly power anywhere to be found, call it liberal or conservative, broad or narrow, Unitarian or Trinitarian, old or new. I want the religion henceforth that can be best utilized in the service of man.

I believe in creeds; but I want creeds that can be conjugated into conduct, absorbed into the veins, and wrought into the fiber of actual manhood and womanhood around me. I believe in church zeal and fervent piety; but not simply that which effervesces through lips and lungs, for

I have noticed that not the steam that hisses and fumes at the valves, but that which remains hidden and silent down in the burning heat of the engine, moves the train. It is a poor fireplace, I have learned, that sends all its heat up chimney, and I take but little stock in any church, however large or respectable, that sends a roaring blaze of devotions and credos toward heaven, but with no warmth left over for poor shivering humanity at its doors. I believe in prayer with all the strength of my reason and the faith of my soul, but I believe most in prayer that does its level best every time itself to answer its own petitions. When Frederick Douglass was a slave, he tells us he prayed earnestly every night and morning for freedom, but when at last he got his eye on the North Star and began to pray with his legs as well as his lips he found out what the "effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man" meant! Now let me prophesy that the church which shall take the initiative most vigorously and persistently along these lines of human service, is to be the church of the future. The most altruistic church, I fully believe, shall be the church of the millennium—the true church of God, because the true church of *man*—whether you call it catholic or heretic, orthodox or heterodox. By virtue of its transcendent objective it shall at last head the entire column, and fly the winning colors on the home stretch of the twentieth century.

And now in closing let me say that for the next twenty-five years, beyond a question, the battle-ground of contention between the churches is largely to be sifted from theology to sociology. And where can be found a textbook on "social science" like this Bible? It was humorously said of the first settlers of Connecticut, that in their first town meeting they voted to live by the laws of God until they got time to make better, and I doubt if their civil code has been much improved to this day. "Law, freedom, education, morality" stand beneath the outspread covers of this holy Volume, down by the sea. "Law"—to glance merely at the first of the quadrangle—what has it done for New England, interpreted by an enlightened conscience? Take the fourth commandment. "Sunday," said Mr. Emerson, "is the core of our civilization"—and he was no bigot; "The best gift of the past to the present," said Theodore Parker, and he was no theological fossil. Try it, then, you gentlemen of the liberal faith, try your Continental Sunday, with its godless adjuncts of greed and lust and license, for two hundred and fifty years and then show us your crop. Let us sample your men and women by the side of the old Pilgrim stock, and see if you have improved your human breed with your anti-Biblical sociology! For twenty-five years this church has stood staunchly by a hallowed Sabbath, and Worcester will never know its debt

of gratitude to this pulpit and people for this one service rendered!

But, it is said, these men of old overworked "law" and underworked the gentler forces of character. It is said they put more justice than love into their theology. It is one thing to assert; it is another thing to prove. Do our modern thinkers forget that in a perfect theodicy love and righteousness never antagonize, but always necessitate each other? When Washington signed the death-warrant of André, it is said, his tears mingled with the ink with which he affixed his official autograph. Thus the light of human pity, shining through those falling tears, threw a rainbow of such ineffable moral grandeur athwart the dark front of justice, that men beholding it got a new conception of the union of law and of love in the government of God. My friends, *love is not laxity*. Goodness is not "*goodiness*" in any government, human or divine. Thus all the virtues and graces of a rounded and robust human character, root themselves in this marvelous Book, this old Bible of the ages, this lamp and light of God from above to guide our human feet. Hold it up, then, granite statue by the sea! Hold it up, pastors and peoples of this church to the latest generation—your one chart, your one beacon light for imperiled humanity, until the eternal port is gained.

THE STONE ROLLED AWAY

“And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.”—
Mark 16: 3, 4.

THE STONE ROLLED AWAY

This opening question of my text, you will remember, was the anxious inquiry of three sad-hearted women, as at early dawn on the third morning after the crucifixion, that first glorious Easter morning, they hastened forth from one of the gates of Jerusalem, carrying, as we read, sweet spices in contemplation of performing the last rites of affectionate honor to the lifeless form of Him, who, as they supposed, forgetting his own words, was yet sleeping the sleep of death. But as the steps of this mournful company drew near the resting-place of their beloved Dead, a sudden recollection entered their minds. They remembered—for these faithful women, earliest at the sepulcher, were also last at the cross, and had lingered to witness the safe interment of the body of Jesus in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa—they remembered that a stone of extraordinary size had been rolled against the aperture of the rocky house of death, wholly barricading its entrance. Accordingly, they were brought to a sudden pause in anticipation of an insuperable obstacle lying directly in the path of their pious and affectionate undertaking. “And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone

from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away." And now, gazing into the open and unobstructed enclosure, they see not, as they had expected, the dead Master, whose lifeless body they had come silently and tearfully to honor, but One clothed in glistening white and with a countenance like lightning, who thus addressed them: "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him." Matthew, giving account of the scene, represents this shining angelic visitant as sitting on the stone itself, which had been rolled aside, thus symbolizing, might we not say? the complete and supernatural victory, now and forever achieved over the empire of death.

Thus these disciples came, expecting to find a barred and darkened tomb; they found one open and luminous, with celestial occupants. They came expecting to find a dead Christ; they found a risen one. They came with flowing tears and stricken hearts to perform only the last sad rites of hopeless grief; they departed with tidings of startling and wondrous joy. They came haltingly, expecting their steps would be arrested by a great and insurmountable barrier;—but, "when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away."

And now, my friends, in these few words of the evangel-

ist, do we not learn on this joyful Easter Sabbath precisely what it is that Jesus, the world's risen Saviour, has done to illumine and beautify forevermore the final resting-place on this earth of the children of God, and to unshackle henceforth, to the end of time, the believing soul from the fear of death? Death has well been called, "the king of terrors." Gazed upon by the eye of sense, the sepulcher is the emblem of all darkness, hopelessness, uncertainty, solitude and corruption. In the grave are quenched forever all sublunary hopes. It is the voiceless land of everlasting stillness, whence no traveler returns, to report his journeyings. It is the windowless prison-house, whose adamantine doors sooner or later close on all earthly beauty, rank, wealth, ambition, pride, love, hate, joy and sorrow. There is no monster so cruel as the grave. "It spares none of woman born." Its mighty, devouring maw is distended wide as our sin-cursed globe. The whole world, says an ancient writer, is but one vast mausoleum of the departed. And even a sacred penman admonitorily writes, "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." All the testimony of our senses, then, and the whole gospel of nature to-day point us only to a shut tomb—a rock-bound sepulcher, an imprisoned Christ. But Jesus entered the sepulcher not to moulder back to dust—for God did not suffer

his Holy One to see corruption—but he entered it to dispel its darkness, to break its fetters, and to throw wide open, forevermore, its charnel-chambers to the sunshine of immortal life. It is not necessary, brethren, that we now deny to the ancient world all belief in the resurrection of the body and the future existence of the soul. Unquestionably, these beliefs could claim to some extent a foothold in our world before the advent of Jesus of Nazareth. But the doctrine of immortality before Christ's day, as compared with that same doctrine after Christ's own resurrection and ascension, can be safely said is as the first streak of light struggling through the gates of the East, to the down-pouring radiance of a cloudless noonday. Christ alone can be said to have "brought life and immortality to light" beyond the grave. He has conquered the grave, by himself stepping into it. He has vanquished the grim monster, death, by taking him to his own embrace. He has forever irradiated the tomb because he himself has lain in it and then "rolled away the stone."

Turning now, for a moment, at this point to the early preaching of the apostles, we cannot fail to notice the striking emphasis which they constantly put on the resurrection of Jesus as the very key-note of their heavenly message, and the foundation doctrine on which they built all their brightest hopes for the future. Directly after the

ascension, returning from Olivet, they begin to preach "through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." To the Corinthians Paul wrote: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain . . . ye are yet in your sins." And when this same dauntless apostle stood on Mars' Hill, in the midst of the proud philosophers of pagan Athens, he unhesitatingly chose the same wonderful text: "He preached unto them," the record tells us, "Jesus, and the resurrection." And just because, as a matter of history, Christ had now already become the first fruits of all that sleep in him, could this same apostle break forth into that impassioned apostrophe unequalled for sublimity in any language, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Through the entire apostolic era this seems to have been the one glorious topic on which the disciples constantly dwelt. Peter, you remember, begins his epistles to the churches with this overture of jubilation: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." John, latest of the apostolic penmen, in the Apocalypse gives us picture after picture of the Church ascendent and

glorified, hymning their ceaseless praises in yonder city of light, where death is forever swallowed up in victory. One foremost object, then, of Christ's mission to this world, it cannot now be doubted, was to abolish death and forever discrown the monster as the boastful king of terrors to the people of God. A mightier than death has now entered that dark realm and vanquished the tyrant in the very citadel of his power. Hence stands forth to-day on the open page of the world's history, as well as on the forefront of this New Testament, as indisputable and accomplished, the fact that the stone has been rolled away from the door of the sepulcher by the ascended Son of God.

And yet, my friends, like those three downcast women on that happy, blessed morning, so do many disciples still draw near the sepulcher with timid and halting footsteps. It is an instinct of our nature, never quite overcome, I am led to think, while the grave is seen at a distance, for us to say, each one of us, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" For a wise purpose our Creator has implanted in every human breast a natural dread of death. It is a dread and an apprehension, that no one, I am satisfied, will ever fully get rid of, at least not until the last hour is reached. We are accustomed in our imaginations to surround the hour of mortal dissolution with every form and image of physi-

cal repulsiveness and suffering. But so profound a thinker as Lord Bacon remarks of death as a mere physical phenomenon, "It is as natural to die as it is to be born, and to a little infant perhaps the one is as painful (and as painless) as the other." An English physician of wide celebrity and practice, Sir Benjamin Brodie, has said that "never but two instances fell under his own observation where in the immediate act of dying was manifested any fear of death, as a mere physical pain." This, then, is to be said, that the merciful Author of our being seems to have given his human children the fear of death so long as he intends they shall live, but kindly takes away that fear when he intends they shall die.

But, writes that great master of the human heart, the Apostle Paul, "the sting of death is sin." Ah, my friends, I cannot think it is the mere pang of physical dissolution that so agitates men as they approach the unseen world.

"To die—to sleep,
No more; and, by a sleep, to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished.

To die, to sleep—
To sleep! perchance to dream! Ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,—
Must give us pause."

Did death, indeed, end all, were there no spirit-hereafter, no righteous awards to be meted out by and by, according to deeds done in the body, then calmly might we lay us down to die, as to our nightly slumber. But has a Christian anything to fear at that tribunal with an Almighty Advocate by his side? Yet it cannot be denied that many true Christians, looking at death while yet at a distance, have apprehensively asked with those three women, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" But as they have drawn nearer, to their surprise, they have looked and seen that the stone was rolled away. How often thus has God been better to his children than their fears!

While death, then, is at a distance, we dread it. It is natural for us to dread it. It is right for us to dread it. It is right for us to cling to this world. God made us to cling to this world and the things that are in this world. He has given us all these earthly affinities and appendencies, and our instinctive love of life and dread of death, so long as we are in health and strength, is clearly designed by our Maker to serve a wise and beneficent purpose in the economies of this world. But when we shall be called to die, to tread the shadowed Valley, then the great Death Conqueror, if we have put our souls into his infinite keeping, our Elder Brother, will go before us. Tenderly he will

point out the stepping-stones for our descending feet, and we shall be lifted up with an infinite and unexpected grace of courage, and our imagined terrors, we shall find, one by one, are vanishing; and when we reach the sepulcher, doubtless, to our speechless amazement, we shall find that the stone has been already rolled away, and instead of darkness within is only light and unspeakable glory.

Once more I wish just to say, right at this point, that to my thinking the Christian world is slow, very slow, even at this late day, to receive into its faith and hope all the fulness of comfort contained in this New Testament doctrine of a risen Christ and an open tomb. We somehow continue to feel that our loved ones, who have been taken from us, are still locked in the cold embrace of the grave. We continue to walk sadly and look downward through tears of repining grief, long after we should have learned to look up through tears of Christian rejoicing. We linger around the Marble City of the Dead, and the shut vaults of mortal corruption, when we should rather turn to hear an angelic voice, "He is not here; he is risen." And I must think, beloved, there is far too much still clinging to our modern Christian faith of that old Jewish and pagan superstition of some dark under-world of temporary spiritual abode, an intermediate state, or purgatorial region, where even believing souls, imprisoned, await the final judgment-

hour and the resurrection morning. But for one, I say to you frankly, I can find no such closed sepulcher as that presented to my yearning faith in all the blessed words of my risen Lord. "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," was his promise to the dying penitent thief, and the incontrovertible drift and conclusion of all inspired teaching, as it seems to me, is, that when Christ's saints shall be absent from the body they will be present with their glorified King and Lord. No, for myself, I cannot believe that the dark sepulcher shall have power to enchain for an hour the ransomed spirit which angels wait to convoy home. I believe that when at last earth's threshold is crossed, the upper gateway will swing open at once to God's victorious saints. So was it with a Christian statesman at Washington, of whom we read a few years ago, who in his last illness desired to be raised on his pillow, that he might behold once more the capitol of his country; but just as his eyes rested on the lofty, sun-bathed marble dome, his departing spirit seemed to transform the earthly building into the unbuilt temple above, and he expired at that moment, with the ecstatic words on his lips, "Beautiful! beautiful! I see the pearly gates, the golden streets." "It is so delightful dying," said brilliant Bishop Gilbert Haven, as his great, burning heart was ceasing to beat, at his mother's home in Malden. "The angels are here. God lifts me up so in

his arms I cannot see the River of Death. There is no river. It is all light." Wrote the well-known author, John S. C. Abbott, to a friend in his last illness: "I am floating upward into heaven. I am gliding away unto God. I have heard of the 'shadow of death,' but I have yet caught no glimpse of it. For five months I have not been dressed. But they have been five of the happiest months of an unusually prosperous life of seventy-one years. I have not known an hour of gloom. Being free from pain and ever ascending the mountain, I hope that God will continue to lead me until I reach its serene and cloudless summit, where the blessed angels will come and take me."

Thus, my dear friends, does this gospel of our hope to-day bring us an absolutely conquered sepulcher; death shorn of his power; his darkest malice now able only to hasten the hour of our eternal release. No longer is the grave to be looked upon by God's child as a dread doorway leading downward to some vague under-world of purgatorial or Stygian gloom, but a triumphal, garlanded arch, under which God's ransomed shall go forth into the light, now inconceivable, of instantaneous and everlasting joy. "And they said among themselves, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?"

But I cannot forget, as I now close, that some are here to-day who have no experience of a risen Saviour's forgiv-

ing love. As their feet move on toward the inevitable end, alas, all is still dark and cold and drear. They have no eye of faith to pierce those dark portals to yonder world of immortal blessedness. They can read no title clear, for them, to mansions in the skies. For them the ponderous stone still bars a hopeless sepulcher and their future is as unlighted and cheerless as though no Saviour had hung on the cross or risen again for their justification.

They are often told of death's quick and stealthy approach, but they close their ears; they will not listen. They have no time to attend to such matters now. But when death, at length, shall knock at the door of their throbbing hearts, he will get a hearing. Yes, he will get a hearing! The busiest and giddiest of mortals must take time to listen to his message—and then they will excuse themselves no longer. A death-bed, it has been well said, is a wonderful reasoner. Many a proud objector has it silenced without a word, who, but a little before, defied all the ability of earth to shake the foundations of his confidence. Yes, all is well with Christless ones while the curtain is up and the puppet show of life goes gaily on, but when the rapid representation draws to its close and every hope of longer respite is precluded, how differently do all things appear! Oh, that men would believe that the suitable time for the last messenger is not when he is at our

side, feeling for our heartstrings; oh, not then, but while in health, while the brain is clear and unfevered, while Jesus waits to be gracious and while the Spirit gently whispers, "Sinner, come," and all the voices of God's merciful and sparing providence are saying, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation."

WHAT SHALL I DO WITH CHRIST?

“What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?” —
Matt. 27: 22.

WHAT SHALL I DO WITH CHRIST?

This was the earnest, eager question of Pilate the Roman governor to the Jewish multitude who stood before him on the morning of the crucifixion. The night before, Jesus had been basely betrayed by Judas and dragged away to the palace of the high priest. But the Jews soon bethought them that they had no lawful power to pronounce sentence of death upon Christ, now in their custody. Accordingly, with the first morning light they hurry him before Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator, on a fabricated charge of treason, that he had sought to make himself a king in place of Cæsar. Pilate sees at a glance that the accusation is groundless, and that Jesus is simply a victim of Jewish malice and envy; but on hearing this specific charge, he thinks it prudent to hold a private interview with the accused. Accordingly, he himself puts the question, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Still more strongly assured by this examination of our Saviour's guiltlessness of any treasonable designs, he reappears before the excited throng and says, "I find in him no fault at all." This declaration, however, seems only to kindle the fury of the mob to a yet higher pitch, and they cry out that the teach-

ings of Jesus have stirred up all Jewry as far as Galilee. Pilate now bethinks him of sending Jesus to Herod, the tetrarch, that he may adjudicate the troublesome case and thus relieve himself of his perplexity. But Herod soon returns the prisoner upon his hands.

Greatly to increase Pilate's embarrassment, at this juncture, as he sits upon the judgment-seat, his wife sends a hurried and mysterious message in these words: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." But Pilate, alas, must have something to do with Jesus; Jesus is on his hands, and he must either acquit or condemn.

Now another thought occurs to the distressed and vacillating mind of the Roman officer. It was his annual custom on the return of the passover feast to release unto the Jews some incarcerated criminal, whomsoever they might select. It so happened that a notorious insurrectionist and murderer, named Barabbas, was at this moment in custody. Pilate reasons with himself, Surely the Jews cannot prefer Barabbas to Jesus. So, with high hopes of a speedy escape from his painful dilemma, he puts before them the ingenious alternative, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?" To his astonishment and dismay the appalling shout comes back

from the maddened throng, "Barabbas!" The governor's heart sinks within him, and, with a voice and manner now almost imploring, he cries out, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified! And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified!"

The foiled and disappointed procurator can conceive of but one more possible expedient. He says, "I will therefore chastise him, and let him go," hoping that by this preliminary punishment some chord of pity may be touched in the breasts of the multitude, and their bloodthirsty clamor be stayed. So he hands Jesus over to the ruthless soldiery, who subject him to the horrible punishment of the Roman scourge, and then they put on him a purple robe, and on his head a crown of thorns, and in his hand a reed, for a scepter (mocking emblems of royalty!). Pilate himself leads forth the suffering Saviour, thus humiliated and bleeding, and placing him in full view of the impatient populace, points to the meek and silent victim of their blind rage, and simply says: "Behold the man!" *Ecce homo!*

Painters have striven to reproduce that scene. Penitent and reverent hearts in every age have adoringly sought to recall that marvelous spectacle of incarnate humility. But

on the pitiless, tumultuous throng before the palace gate that scene was powerless. Only louder, fiercer, more irrepressible went up the bitter, bloody cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Now, mingled with these vociferations, the warning words reach the ear of the time-serving governor, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." That final voice settled the question. Pilate could not hazard the suspicions of Cæsar. He surrenders the issue. Jesus is delivered to the mob and hurried quickly away to the place of crucifixion. The irresolute and conscience-smitten man, however, makes one more futile attempt to shift from himself the responsibility of his monstrous crime. In imitation of a Jewish ceremonial, he takes water, and dramatically washing his hands before the multitude, with lying lips says to them, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person." Ah, miserable self-deluded man, to think with a few drops of water to wash out that damning conscience stain, that thenceforth shall burn and blast thy guilty soul forever!

In retracing the several steps of this trial scene, before the bar of Pilate, it is not difficult, I think, my friends, now to perceive that the Roman governor's judicial integrity and, indeed, his own moral and spiritual nature all pivoted on the simple answer he should now give to his own dis-

tressed and burdened inquiry, "What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ?" Alas, in that critical hour he made an unrighteous decision—a fatal disposal of God's guiltless Son—and thereby whelmed his own soul in hopeless condemnation.

For a moment, then, at this point let us pause to discover, if we may, precisely what was the sin of Pilate in this great and fearful drama of human guilt that ended with the crucifixion. Pilate's sin I take to be simply this: he was unwilling to act up, unhesitatingly, to his clear convictions of right and duty. He was fully empowered by his judicial office, instantly and unconditionally, to acquit Jesus of the malicious charge brought against him. He was himself fully convinced of his innocence. For the third time during the trial, he said to the Jewish rabble, "What evil hath he done? I find no cause of death in him." Pilate's legal judgment, then, was satisfied perfectly that the indictment against Christ could not stand a fair trial. His conscience, moreover, was on the Saviour's side. After each interview, you remember, he returns with only the one intensified assertion, "I find no fault in him!" And in that last blasphemous ritual of the hand-washing, his conscience bore irrepressible witness to the character of Jesus as a "just person"—while that very admission now brands his own name with eternal infamy.

So, again, all the retributive moral instincts of Pilate's breast were on the side of Christ and in favor of acquittal. The remarkable dream of his wife evidently startled him. When at one point in the trial, the Jews casually remarked, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God," the Evangelist records, that when Pilate heard that saying, he was sore afraid, and went again into the judgment-hall, and said unto Jesus, "Whence art thou?" Indeed, from the very outset a painful apprehension seemed gaining steadily on Pilate's mind that he was dealing with a personage more than human. His whole moral nature was somehow strangely stirred and vivified by contact with that wonderful prisoner on his hands. All his higher nature then decided for Jesus—his judgment, his conscience, his religious sensibilities, and all his instinctive fears of coming retribution. Why, then, did he give sentence against Christ? In brief, it must now be said that Pilate in this trial stands before all time a self-convicted moral *coward*.

There was no evidence that he was specially lacking in physical courage. On many occasions during his Judæan procuratorship, he evinced great ferocity and force of nature. Secular history describes him as a man of vehement passions, obstinate temper and, at times, great rashness of public policy. But he was absolutely minus moral cour-

age. He dared not follow his own convictions of duty in the face of an influential public opinion to the contrary. Lacking moral courage, he lacked, of course, all true decision of character. Indeed, this was his one fatal weakness disclosed in this trial. He was arrogant, wilful, capricious, impulsive, but he had no manly executiveness of character. He trifled with his own convictions, he dallied with his own conscience. He procrastinated, hesitated, shuffled. He suffered himself to be driven from point after point in his righteous defence of his prisoner, and that by the empty clamors of a mob. And at last, in a kind of nerveless despair, in a fit of sheer impotency of resolution, he seemed passively to resign Jesus to the rage of his murderers, so pitiable to witness. But now back of all this moral irresolution was another reason for Pilate's adverse sentence, and probably far more influential than any yet noticed over his ultimate decision. Pilate was a notorious aspirant for political honors. He held his present office of procurator by appointment of the jealous Tiberius of Rome. The least suspicion of his loyalty reaching the ear of the irascible emperor, however unfounded, would probably prove instantly fatal to all his ambition. The good will of the Jewish populace, then, in the face of such a danger, must be secured at all hazards. He, therefore, makes his decision. Jesus must be sacrificed on the altar of per-

sonal popularity. He consents to crucify the innocent Son of God, that he may not imperil that glittering prize of station, rank and power that floats before his idolatrous vision. He makes his choice. He chooses the world at the cost of his soul. Yet, wretched man, he misses even the bauble for which he has risked everything. A few years after the fearful tragedy enacted on Calvary, and for which history will ever hold Pontius Pilate officially responsible, a disappointed and broken-hearted man, like Judas Iscariot he ended his wretched life, history informs us, with his own hand and went to a suicide's grave, only to be followed by the universal execrations of mankind. "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" Alas, for the answer which history must now evermore write against that burdened question of the Prætorian palace in Jerusalem!

But is it a question that has never pressed upon human consideration, save that of the Roman procurator, long centuries ago? Stands it not forth to-day, my friends, the one great, central, burning truth of human history, that Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of Galilee, the Christ of the manger and the cross, was not disposed of in that brief trial-hour in old Judæa? What saith the Scripture? "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth ex-

pecting till his enemies be made his footstool." Jesus lives, and is alive forevermore, the risen, mediating and omnipresent Saviour of all men. He condescends still to stand at the door of every human heart, for whom once he died, suing for that heart's finite friendship. He condescends, as when in the flesh, to appeal to every human reason, to be accepted or rejected at its bar. He even humbles himself to stand at the judgment-seat of every human conscience, to be acknowledged King or to be crowned once more with thorns, mocked as malefactor. And, my friends, strange truth now to declare, on your lips and on mine to-day, the momentous question of Roman Pilate is individually pertinent, What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?

From this point forward, very briefly, let me press upon your thoughtful notice a few considerations. And just no more than for Pilate of old, is it possible for any intelligent student of the Christian record to-day to dismiss Jesus, the one effulgent personality running through the whole gospel story, unexamined, from the court of his own judgment and conscience. Out of his written Word, as once out of the clouds of heaven, does God now say to every human soul, "This is my beloved Son: *hear him.*"

The Saviour presents himself to-day to every human being personally, as Redeemer, Lord and King. From the

lips of his inspired messengers, we hear the uncompromising words, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Jesus, then, stands arraigned to-day, not by a mere figure of speech, but at the bar of our individual moral intelligence. We cannot dismiss his case. We cannot ignore his claims. We cannot waive his trial. He is on our hands. We cannot transfer him to the jurisdiction of any other human potentate or investigator. It is a question for us personally to settle, "What shall I do with Jesus?" By all the imperatives of our moral being, we are shut up to a verdict, for or against. Like Pilate of old, we must now crown or scourge, acquit or condemn, the Son of God.

Still further, each one of us, unshared by any other, must take the full responsibility of our decision. Never again can any one of us be as if Jesus had not died and we had never heard of redeeming mercy, proffered through his name. "If I had not come and spoken unto them," said Christ, "they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who

hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing?" No human being who has heard the gospel message and the gospel invitation can now shift from himself a tremendous personal interest in that great redemptive transaction on Calvary.

But now, having gone so far, by the exigencies both of logic and Scripture, I must go one step further. As God's minister and on the warrant of his Word, I must now say that every human soul under Christian light is shut up to-day to a yet more desperate alternative. Even Pilate's stern breast quailed before that first brutal outcry, "Crucify him." But you and I to-day must do one of two things—let me speak with all caution and sobriety of language—we must hang our idol-sin on the cross, or we must hang, once more, our Saviour there. We must crucify the darling sin of our guilty souls, or that darling sin to-day will crucify afresh the Son of God. Oh, it was sin, incorrigible heart sin, that first nailed Jesus to the accursed tree! It is this same blind unbelief, this same cruel heart-rejection of dying love by impenitent ones, that is now opening afresh all those flowing wounds. If, then, we love sin more than we love Him who died to save us from our sins, we consent unto his death, and are accessories after the fact of that stupendous tragedy on Calvary.

Do you repel such words as injurious? Do you say to me that the sting of impenitent sin cannot be as venomous in human hearts to-day as in that of heathen Pilate? Are we better by nature than he? And by practice, if still rejecters of the world's risen Lord, are we sinning against light and love and mercy, less amazing than he? Pilate lived in the twilight of Christian evidence, we in its noon-day blaze. Pilate, at most, reached only a dim glimmering suspicion of the radiant Kingship of Jesus. We, without a doubt, now confess him, with Peter, to be the "Christ of God." All the concentrated light of eighteen centuries is now focused and flooded on the pathway of practical irreligion. All the amazing grace of heaven, every unbelieving heart is to-day steadily resisting. All the tender pleading and measureless love of Jesus every Christless soul is now scorning and despising. Oh, then, tell me not that that wretched, pagan Pilate was a sinner above all others, or that if we, in this marvelous century of Christian opportunity, do not repent, that we shall not all likewise perish! "What shall I do then with Jesus?" was Pilate's burdened question. It is a question, believe me, which weighs down many an uneasy and troubled heart to-day.

But the hour hastens. Let us remember when, with each of us, the question of questions will be, not "What shall I do with Jesus?" but "What will Jesus do with me?" Look

yonder, Jesus humiliated at the bar of Pilate; but, yonder, Pilate at the bar of Jesus—Jesus regnant and glorified. “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.” On the shore of Lake Lucerne, in Switzerland, there rises sharp and frowning against the western sky a notable mountain. It is called Mount Pilatus. Its dark and cavernous sides are belted with forests of the gloomy fir-tree, and around its lofty and lightning-scarred brow, ill-omened birds constantly circle. There exists a popular legend, in that country, that after years of remorse, Pontius Pilate, with the mark of Cain on his brow, ended his wretched life by plunging into the storm-lashed lake at the top of this mountain. But the vexed spirit of the murderer of Jesus could not rest. A spectral form, the peasants say, is often seen to emerge from the dismal lake, wash his hands in the black waves, and then wring them in an unavailing agony—faint fore-judgment, must we not say? of that final sentence from the lips of the Saviour-Judge, when all nations shall be gathered before Him!

“What will we do with Jesus which is called Christ?” Perhaps some, without the blessed hope, are ready to say,

"I am disposed to do right with Jesus. I am disposed to treat him justly and kindly." Ah,—but will you? Pilate, remember, was disposed to do right with Jesus. He bore him no malice. From first to last, during all that fearful trial, gladly would he have liberated him. Ah, but those scribes! those Pharisees! that shouting populace! imperial Cæsar! glittering worldly ambition! Oh, no, it could not be done. Jesus must be sacrificed. "Take him away."

You know what you ought to do with your inviting Saviour to-day, my unsaved friend,—but will you? Will you? Oh, the world, pleasure, riches, brilliant worldly hopes! Do you say, I cannot now decide; I cannot yet face the frown of the world; I cannot yet crown Jesus Lord and King of my world-idolizing soul? Take him away! Take him away! "Crucify him!" Are you ready to meet that decision yonder? Oh, that from some lips here to-day might now go up to the waiting ranks above a more blessed choice! "This will I do with Jesus: I will open the door of my long-shut heart and bid him royally enter. I will welcome him to this lost and guilty soul of mine, to cleanse, to bless and to save. I will lay everything at his feet, as He has given all for me. Gratefully, joyfully will I confess his name before a gainsaying world, that at the last, when my helpless soul shall stand in judgment, his words to me may be, not the fearful sentence, "Depart,"

but those other words, full of immortal cheer, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?"

TRIBUTES TO DOCTOR GOULD

TRIBUTES TO DR. GOULD

A summary of the career of Dr. Gould appeared in "The Worcester of 1898" and the same, reproduced here, gives succinctly the leading features of a life that was fraught with good.

Instead of the traditional "three brothers" emigrating to this country, it is said that between the years 1635 and 1655 more than twenty persons by the name of Gould came from different parts of England to find homes in New England. Among the most noted of these was the Rev. Thomas Gould who settled in Charlestown, and Zaccheus Gould who located in Lynn. Some members of this widely distributed Gould family proudly brought with them across the sea a coat of arms, with this device: a powerful right arm uplifted and grasping a sledge-hammer, while underneath were the words, *Volens et potens*, "willing and able."

George H. Gould, son of Rufus and Mary Gould, was born in Oakham, Massachusetts, February 20, 1827. His father was a native of Charlton and his mother was born in Rutland. The Henrys came originally from Scotland and settled chiefly in Virginia, its most famous representative being Patrick Henry, the great Revolutionary orator, and first governor of Virginia. It has always been a pleasing postulate of Dr. Gould's imagination, although the family links are not so closely welded as he might wish, that through his mother he is a direct descendant of Patrick Henry. Thus the blood of both England and Scotland mixed in his veins.

Dr. Gould fitted for college at Monson Academy, entered Amherst College in 1846 and was graduated in the class of 1850. He then entered Union Theological Seminary, left it during the middle year to attend Professor Park's brilliant course of lectures on systematic theology at Andover, and returning to Union Seminary for his third year was graduated in 1853. Just before leaving the seminary he received an invitation to become colleague pastor with the Rev.

Albert Barnes of Philadelphia, but at this period, suffering much from ill health, from overstudy, and especially from lack of gymnastic training, now so happily enjoyed by students, he went West to engage with an old college friend in railroad engineering with the hope of recovering his health; but instead contracted a malignant form of malaria in the swamps skirting the shore of Lake Michigan and this misfortune was the one bane and misery of his whole subsequent physical life.

During these two years, as strength allowed, he preached intermittently in various cities of the West,—Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison, Beloit and other places, and also lectured in lyceum courses in several states of the Northwest during the winter—this whole experience covering about two years.

Soon after, Doctor Gould formed an acquaintance with the late John B. Gough, the distinguished temperance advocate and orator, and the friendship then formed continued until the death of the latter. Accepting Mr. Gough's invitation to go with him to England, the next two and one half years were spent abroad, one year in England, four months in Edinburgh, six in Paris, two in Rome, several in Germany, besides two summers in Switzerland.

Before his return to this country Mr. Gould received a unanimous call to the pastorate of the Bowdoin Street Church, Boston, formerly Doctor Lyman Beecher's, but could not consider it.

Returning home in October, 1862, he married Nellie M. Grant, daughter of Jonathan Grant, Esquire, and a sister of "Willie Grant," the young martyr of Balls Bluff whose tragic death inspired the writing of "The Vacant Chair." For two years from this time he was stated supply of Olivet Church, Springfield, Massachusetts, meanwhile receiving urgent calls from the Sixth Street Presbyterian Church, Troy, New York, and Park Church, Norwich, Connecticut.

In December, 1864, he was settled as pastor of the old Center Church in Hartford, Connecticut, in which call and settlement it was stipulated that he was, by reason of impaired health, to preach but one sermon each Sunday. Here he remained six years, it being the first and only formal settlement over any church.

Dr. Gould returned to Worcester to make it his permanent home in 1870, and during the next two or three years supplied for various intervals the pulpits of Central Church and Union Church in Providence, Rhode Island; Walnut Avenue and Immanuel Churches in Boston, and then began with Piedmont Church in Worcester in

its infancy, and enjoyed a most sacred, tender and delightful acting pastorate with that beloved people for five years. Subsequently, on the retirement of Dr. Cutler, he preached two and a half years in Union Church in Worcester. New edifices were erected by both Piedmont and Union during his stay among them. While at Piedmont Church, Doctor Gould was invited to the pulpit of Amherst College as a College preacher and in connection therewith to the "Chair of Biblical History." About the same time overtures were made to him by the Third Church, of New Haven, Connecticut, for a service of one sermon per Sunday for one year, at a salary of six thousand dollars. Thus his whole ministerial life, by the ordering of Providence, has been largely fragmentary, continually interrupted by chronic disability, but like some other notable invalids he has been able to perform a great deal of work.

Dr. George Leon Walker of Hartford writing to "The Congregationalist" some years ago on the unfortunate invalidism of certain prominent clergymen and professors in our seminaries, after other concrete citations, makes the following eulogistic reference to the subject of this sketch: "The very eloquent minister of Piedmont Church at Worcester, who certainly has no superior in New England."

John B. Gough, who when at home was Dr. Gould's parishioner for five years at Piedmont Church, says in his autobiography: "In 1856 I first met Dr. Gould and was fascinated by his preaching. He is emotional with no sensationalism. He speaks with an earnestness that convinces you he believes all he utters, with a deep pathos revealing the tenderness of his own nature, an eloquence perfectly natural, a face radiant at times when he utters some lofty thought. He has no monotonous repetitions: there is nothing stale or conventional in his preaching. He reaches the intellect and the heart, and were it not for his health he would have been one of the widely known, popular preachers of the day."

Dr. Gould received the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from Amherst College, his alma mater, in 1870.

During the last decade he has continued to preach with frequency, but owing to the necessities of health, almost entirely within the near vicinity of his own home. The photograph accompanying this sketch was taken on his seventieth birthday.

That Dr. Gould held a high place in the estimation and

affection of his brother ministers and others, the following quotations from letters will best express. Says Dr. D. O. Mears, Dr. Gould's immediate successor at Piedmont Church, Worcester:—

Among the colossal characters of Worcester giving wide fame to the city, Dr. Gould holds a unique place. To timid or wavering minds he was a citadel of strength and power. I cannot recall a great moral, civic or national question on which he did not take a firm stand and for which he had his profound reasons. He had the faith and strength of which martyrs are made. But more than this he inspired others to take his stand. He was as gentle as he was strong. The sympathy of his heart was only matched by his superb intellectual brilliancy. It was by this broad many-sidedness of his nature and character that he held such power over all who met him. In all his physical weariness and sufferings he was as radiant as is the mariner's light above the restless waves. His spiritual nature was dominant over all else. Under the sufferings of the passing years none ever thought him frail or called him "old." He ranks with such men as Robert Hall, Frederick W. Robinson and Bushnell in the transcendent achievements wrought by a sound mind in an unsound body. . .

No moral or religious gathering was ever complete without Dr. Gould. He was strongly conservative, yet the times never ran away from him. . . .

But he is not dead. Many a time have men spoken of some text by his striking treatment of it. He had the genius, as did Jeffries, of condensing large truths into an adjective even. His analysis of an abstruse problem was as keen as a surgeon's knife.

Dr. Homer T. Fuller, President of Drury College, for several years at the head of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, writes:—

In the earlier history of this college Dr. Gould came here at a Commencement and gave one of his inspiring addresses, which is still mentioned as having made strong and deep impress on all who heard it. One of our trustees, himself a graduate of the college, said of it recently: "It was the most eloquent address I ever heard."

So the seed good men sow is not lost but reproduced in the lives of others.

Dr. Strong, President of Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota, wrote:—

For many years before hearing him speak, the reputation of Dr. Gould led me to esteem him one of the marked men in the New England ministry, but when through the pleasure of a personal acquaintance I felt the charm of his delightful personality, one of the secrets of his power and of his success became apparent.

In a beautiful "Tribute" to Dr. Gould's memory in "The Congregationalist" of May 18, 1899, Rev. C. M. Southgate says:—

As a preacher his name easily ranks among those of the first magnitude in his generation. His extended work at Center Church, Hartford, and at Piedmont and Union Churches in Worcester, with services in many distinguished pulpits, demonstrated that all his conspicuous gifts were used to enforce a living spiritual power over the souls of men. Those associated with him in the five years from the organization of Piedmont Church recall that, with all the distractions of a new and strenuous undertaking, the church was in a continuous revival. He often spent as much time upon the preparation for a prayer meeting as upon a sermon. Even when ill health of later years shut him out from regular ministrations he was constantly sought for public occasions, especially at installing councils, and whoever else took part Dr. Gould's was apt to be the feature most anticipated and most quoted.

While eminently a man for great occasions, nowhere was he more eloquent than in some impromptu talk at association or ministers' meeting, nowhere more delightful than in most familiar intercourse. The affectionateness of his nature, while extending outside, rested most intensely in his home, and it is to the tender solicitude which watched and shielded him there that we owe much of his ability to serve the world abroad, and doubtless some years of the life which at past threescore and ten seems all too short.

His intense loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the strong evangelical faith which he had experienced and preached can be il-

lustrated best by his own words at an installation in Worcester in 1891: "Unless I mistake, brethren, the alarming vice and weakness of many of our modern pulpits is that so largely they have given themselves over to the preaching of Christian ethics instead of the gospel. Do I disparage Christian ethics? Heaven forbid! Beyond controversy they are an essential feature in all Christian character-building, but they are not the gospel. They are not salvation. Indeed, I do not hesitate to say that there is not enough Christian ethics in all the peerless utterances of the incarnate Son of God when on earth to save one human soul! There is not Christian ethics enough packed between the lids of the whole New Testament to disenthral one sinner from the shackles of spiritual slavery that bind him! The world to-day, sin-weary and crushed under life's burdens and sorrows, is crying out almost in an agony of quest for the uplifted and sacrificial Christ of the Scriptures—the dying and redeeming Lord and Lamb of Calvary, who alone can take away the sin of the world."

Miss Helen Spring of Springfield, Massachusetts, a step-daughter of Deacon George S. Merriam, to whom Dr. Gould was indebted for much of his educational course, sends these touching words:—

When I was in Montclair a few days ago, one of Susie's boys, looking at your husband's picture, asked me about him, and I told him of the early days when he was like one of our own family and of the unchanging friendship which has lasted until now. And as I dwelt in thought upon his lovely character and the warm regard we have always felt for him, I determined to write him a long letter, to bring him within our family circle and to assure him of our unabated interest and affection. . . .

Surely one needs not to mourn when such a pure, ripened soul goes home, and it is a joy to think what freedom he will feel, now for the first time in his life free from the wearisome trammels of his poor frail body.

The following is an extract from a letter in "The Congregationalist," from Rev. Franklin M. Sprague, Tampa, Florida:

Your announcement of the death of Dr. George H. Gould brought

sorrow to hearts in every part of the land. For four years he was my pastor, and for twenty-five years he has been my brother and adviser in the ministry. Twenty-seven years ago a few brethren organized Piedmont Church in Worcester, Massachusetts. We were small in number and resources. The Baptists of North Main Street kindly allowed us the use of their church. It fell to Mr. F. B. Knowles of blessed memory and myself to invite Dr. Gould to preach for us. He consented. Such preaching and such praying I never heard before; no, nor since. People flocked to the services and were converted. The success of the new church was now assured.

Piedmont has had able successors of Dr. Gould, but its present membership can hardly realize how much the church owes to its first pastor. Its high plane of spirituality, its loyalty to doctrine, its splendid missionary contributions, and, above all, its home evangelization work, are all built upon the foundations laid, under God, by Dr. Gould.

Once after Sunday-school he said to me, "You ought to preach the gospel." I began the study of theology under him. More than to any other man I owe to Dr. Gould whatever of success has attended my ministry. I feel that the forty additions to my church last year, mostly on confession, were due in part to his influence. I can hardly bear the thought that I shall see his face no more.

What was the secret of Dr. Gould's success? He went straight to God and the Bible for inspiration and power. Human sources of knowledge and authority, however popular, were always and wholly subordinate. He appreciated learning, but he worshiped only one hero, Jesus Christ. His spiritual vision was as quick and keen as the eye of an eagle. Like Webster he had settled upon a few first principles as universally and eternally true. To these, as to a touchstone, all current questions were instantly referred. Every scrap of his extensive knowledge was baptized with the Holy Ghost and also with sanctified common sense. He had a wonderful power of imagination, but it was only used to illustrate and enforce gospel lessons and always buttressed by sound judgment. Dr. Gould rightly distrusted externalism and the spectacular in religion. Superficiality he abhorred. Refined and delicate in his feelings, he shrank from public gaze except he could thereby serve his Master. He coveted the love of all, but he never sacrificed the truth for the applause of men.

Dr. Gould was a passionate lover of truth and a passionate hater

of shams. He was tolerant toward men but not toward evil; he was quick to hear and slow to speak, but when he did speak men listened. "He keeps saying something all the time," said a man to me once as we were leaving the church. Men went away from his sermons to think, to pray and to repent. With Dr. Gould sin was a tremendous fact and its consequences unspeakably awful. Heaven was a glorious reality. O how we need such preachers to-day, when the crucial truths of the gospel are minimized and denied! It is hoped that Dr. Gould's sermons and addresses will soon be published.

For many years, no layman in Piedmont Church has been better known than Deacon Charles T. Haynes, so long a teacher in Worcester. He writes of Dr. Gould:—

It was my great pleasure to make the acquaintance of Dr. George H. Gould about 1872. Our intimate friendship lasted over twenty-five years. During the first five years of Piedmont Church he was the acting pastor. He did good foundation work on spiritual lines. His religion was *a life*. To me he was a remarkable preacher, though not always a comfortable one. He was a doctrinal preacher of a most practical kind. Without personalities he often made his hearer feel, "Thou art the man." He was a student of the Bible, a growing thinker, a convincing speaker, a helpful pastor. His preaching left a definite and lasting impression. This feature made him an effective speaker on special occasions, and he *honored his audiences* by giving them something worth remembering.

He suffered much. He comforted many broken hearts and lifted scores to a higher life and his light is now shining behind him.

From the time I met him as a stranger, during many years of allied experiences, in the pulpit, in the home, on the street, on his death-bed, till I saw him lowly, lovingly laid in his silent grave, he was one of God's best gifts to my spiritual life.

Only five members of the class of 1850 survive, and from Rev. Wm. F. Avery come these words, written in Conway, Massachusetts:—

One specimen of his power as a public speaker, I prize. I was at a large gathering of the conference of churches of central Massa-

chusetts. Just before it was to be dissolved the Rev. Geo. H. Gould was called for. He stepped to the front of the platform and thrilled us with an address, sound in doctrine and full of true adaptation to circumstances that moment sprung upon him. I said to myself, "Admirable! You are a true Christian orator!" Such are glimmering impressions of one I saw enough of to greatly love.

From his home in Providence, Rhode Island, Dr. D. W. Faunce, another classmate and father of President Faunce of Brown University, writes:—

I am glad to know that a selection from the sermons of my esteemed classmate, Dr. Gould, is soon to be published. I may be permitted to suggest that a sermon I heard from him, some ten years ago, at Springfield, on the text "*And as they went they were cleansed*" (Luke 17:14), be included. It was a fine exhibition of the true preaching that sees not only a fact, but, as was Dr. Gould's wont, the mingled philosophy and practicality of the fact. I recalled the old college mood of mind he always exhibited under the teachings of Dr. H. B. Smith, who had our senior class, just before he went to Union Seminary. And I recalled certain walks and talks about Dr. Smith's way of teaching, which was wholly unlike any other teaching in college. Drs. Gould and Manning were wont to say, as did some others, that they had owed more to him than to any other professor at Amherst.

I recall so clearly the tall, straight figure of Gould; his flashing eye as he discussed college questions, and his happy way of retort when closely pressed.

But the thing I recall with most pleasure was not so much his vigorous intellectual work as his consistent Christian life. He maintained himself as a thoroughly Christian man in those circumstances of a college career where so many fail. He did not need a reconversion to enter the ministry. I was thinking only a few days ago of the old class prayer-meetings in the Senior room, when Gould used to take prominent part. His favorite hymn, then, was

"Give me a calm, a thankful heart
From every murmur free."

He started it in nearly every meeting to the then new tune of

"Naomi." They are gone, all save five of them—not dead; but gone where there is the "more abundant life" in Christ.

"God calls our loved ones, but we lose
Not wholly what he has given;
They live on earth, in thought and deed,
As truly as in his heaven."

Believe me that I am glad to write these few hurried words of a classmate loved as well as respected by all in the class of 1850.

After an illness of two months, consequent upon a stroke of apoplexy a year and a half previous, Dr. Gould passed away in the afternoon of May 8, 1899. He had so far rallied from the shock in October as to take part in quite a number of public services. Among the last of these was the Jubilee service at Pilgrim Church, consequent upon the raising of the debt-subscription.

His last really public effort was a little more than a year before his death, when he "pronounced a most eloquent and touching eulogy" upon his life-long friend, Dr. Cutler, pastor emeritus of Union Church, Worcester. To one who knew him well a slight hesitation occasionally in pronouncing a word was all that made apparent his recent illness. To show how much anxiety was felt for him at this his first effort after the stroke, we quote a most tender and sympathetic letter written him immediately after by Dr. Tuttle:—

I cannot forbear telling you how grateful, delighted and comforted I am by the manner of your delivery to-day. You spoke with great vigor; your voice rang out like a trumpet and filled the church perfectly. You gave perfect evidence that your speaking power is unimpaired. If you had not been particular to correct several words, no one would have known that you did not enunciate every

syllable distinctly. . . I am so pleased and grateful that you can speak in public as well as ever.

In 1889 a letter was received from a stranger, dated Astor House, New York City, who the night before had heard Dr. Gould preach in Springfield. Here is a passage from his letter:—

Now I want very much that you give me as full a sketch of that sermon as is convenient and possible within your opportunity, and it will be a favor that will place me under lasting obligations to you. I want it for my own joy and peace and spiritual exaltation; for the good it bestowed on me as you gave it cannot be measured.

A stranger happened in at an installation address given by Dr. Gould. He was so impressed by some parts of the same that he had them printed upon a postal card, of which he circulated a large number. The first our friend knew of it was the receipt of one of the cards, on which the following words appeared:—

Extract from an address by Rev. G. H. Gould, D. D., at a recent installation in Worcester.

Unless I mistake, brethren, the alarming vice and weakness of many of our modern pulpits is that so largely they have given themselves over to the *preaching of Christian ethics instead of the gospel*. Do I disparage Christian ethics? Heaven forbid! Beyond controversy they are an essential factor in all Christian character-building; but they are not the gospel. They are not salvation. Indeed, I hesitate not to say that there is not enough Christian ethics in all the peerless utterances of the incarnate Son of God when on earth to save one human soul! There is not Christian ethics enough packed between the lids of the whole New Testament to disenthral one sinner from the shackles of spiritual slavery that bind him! The world to-day, sin-weary and crushed under life's burdens and sorrows, is crying out almost in an agony of quest for the uplifted and sacrificial Christ of the Scriptures—the dying and redeeming Lord and Lamb of Calvary, who alone can take away the sin of the world.

You simply then, my brother minister, *preach damnation* to your hearers when you hold up before them flawless ethics, and perfect ideals of human behavior, with no superadded grace and deliverance and joy of the gospel! . . .

Unless I greatly misread, then, the signs of the times, there is a growing demand among us for a return to the simple preaching of the gospel. Our people, many of them at least, are tired of being fed on ethical husks and reformatory harangues and theological incertitudes, and the indigestible stones of a Christless and crossless rationalism, in place of that Bread which came down from heaven, and for which immortal souls all around us are starving. When the fiery plague smote the wilderness, and the bitten Israelites lay dying all around him, Moses might have made a heroic effort to exterminate those venomous reptiles one by one. But the task would have been hopeless. He straightway, at God's command, lifted up *His own symbol of cure*—the brazen antitype and antidote, appointed of high heaven, that all who looked might live. It is a good thing, brethren, to clip the branches of evil, but it is a better thing, for God's prophet and God's preacher to lay the axe at the root of the tree. It is a good thing to ameliorate human condition along moral, social, political and humanitarian lines, but before this lost race of ours shall be "delivered from the thrall and plague and doom of sin, its gaze must be fixed in humble, penitent faith on the uplifted cross of a dying and an atoning Saviour."

A few days before Dr. Gould's death was received a letter of condolence and sympathy from Dr. A. H. Plumb. He says:—

Give him my warmest love and abounding thanks for all his powerful service in the cause of truth and righteousness. There was no man held in higher esteem by the remarkable band of able and goodly men who founded the Walnut Avenue Church: and his persuasion first led me to turn from my former pastorate to this. He had a prevision, that I had not, and I tremble when I think how near I came to missing the great happiness of my long pastorate here, and I should have missed it but for him.

From Dr. Gould's early associates in Hartford come

words that revive cherished and sacred memories. Dr. E. P. Parker of the South Church writes:—

Dear Gould, how vividly he stands out before my mind's eye, a most rememberable man! Nothing vague or indefinite about him, but a sharp, clear silhouette, form and face. How cleverly he could take and give! He would chide my faults in a delightful way. He would thresh us in the best of humor. We all loved him very much indeed. He was a man of great power in preaching and some of his sermons should be published and I am glad you are at the work. Those old days when Gould and Burton were with us seem like days of a golden age to me.

Dr. Joseph Twitchell of the Asylum Hill Church writes affectionately of the days of nearly forty years ago as follows:—

My personal memories of George H. Gould are, above everything else, affectionate and grateful. I greatly admired and honored him, but most of all I loved him. My acquaintance with him dates from the period of my settlement in Hartford. At the service of my installation in the pastorate there in 1865 he gave me the right hand of fellowship. During the five succeeding years while he continued minister of our old First Church, he, for himself, fulfilled in all ways, and in amplest measure, the brotherly office so pledged. Frequently in those years I was in need of them. I can never forget the comfort and courage I then derived from him in many an hour of depression. And the marvel of it was, that all that time, owing to the state of his health, his own spirits were often, perhaps as a rule, far from buoyant. Yet, somehow, while it might be cloudy weather with him, he would make me see the sun. There was a sort of unconquerable brightness in him that was, at least to a remarkable extent, proof against the effect on his mood of the bodily ills he suffered. He was not made selfish by them. He would tell you how wretchedly he felt, and then laugh at it. Kindness, geniality, sympathy shone in his face even when it bore the signature of sickness and pain. And the better one knew him the more was one impressed with the sweetness and depth of his Christian character. No wonder that I came soon to love him dearly, as I did, and have never ceased to do!

The occasions of our meeting in his later years were not many, but all the more were fondly welcomed and eagerly enjoyed.

My fraternal sentiment toward him lost none of its strength with time. Whenever I clasped his hand, I seemed to receive again the right hand of fellowship that made us friends in the beginning.

The Rev. John J. Putnam, Unitarian, of Worcester, has this to say:—

As I knew Dr. Gould, he was a man of positive convictions, with the moral courage to avow them on all proper occasions. The independence of thought which he claimed for himself, he freely accorded to other intelligent and conscientious inquirers. His greeting to me was uniformly cordial, his hand of friendliness if not of fellowship at once seemed to stretch graciously over disputed theological boundaries; and while he was too sincere to minimize differences of opinion, he was too broad-minded and catholic in spirit to assume dogmatic airs. He finely exemplified the motto: "Speaking the truth in love." Not only was truth exalted in him, but joined with love, it became supreme.

Dr. Almon Gunnison, now president of the St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York, and for several years the popular minister over the First Universalist Church, Worcester, writes to Dr. Gould a very kind and characteristic letter concerning his essay on "Sermon Making":—

I have read with interest and profit your strong essay on Sermon Making, and wish it could have been given before all the ministers instead of before the little coterie of Congregationalist clerics, who need not a physician. It has the *sinewy strength* which marks all your work, and the tonic flavor of a breath of the north wind on a summer's day. Why would it not be a good article for the Homiletic Magazine? Dr. McCullagh told me on Monday night that you had given a great paper and I came to it on Tuesday with the expectancy with which I read all that comes from your pen. Even when I am the subject of your mental excursions or dissections, I never fail to find you interesting, for when a man is hunting around to find the marrow of my bones, I like to know that he is an artist,

and if I must be skinned alive I like to have it done by a gentleman. I hope you will not allow your pen to get rusty, or your voice to become dull through lack of use. You are "a master of assemblies"—and you want to keep your throne warm by keeping your place on it. I have not had a sight of you for some time, and am glad to have the evidence that your hand holds its cunning and your strong force knows no abatement. I hold you in affectionate esteem for your worth's sake and work's sake, and I might as well say so before you die as afterwards.

May the Lord bless you and keep you!

In introducing Dr. Plumb of Boston, Dr. Scott said: "Anticipating this hour, our beloved brother said: 'Send for Dr. Plumb. He knows more about me than any one else.'" Dr. Plumb said in part:—

A Christian and especially a Christian minister, whenever he departs from a place, leaves always there the result of his influence, for he has been a well-spring of light. A Christian is always doing good. Wherever a Christian minister has been, there is an imperceptible diffusion of the truth through all society.

One element in Dr. Gould that we all think of has already been alluded to. He was faithful to his trust. Our brother was ever engaged in the manifestation of truth and we love to think of him as meeting in the other world with those who have been led by his faithfulness.

His earnestness is another point of which I wish to speak. Dr. Gould was always under the consuming passion of a devoted heart. How sweet was his sympathy with the spirit of Christ! As a minister I wish to say something of his demeanor. He never forgot he was an ambassador of Christ. He was in the ministry for souls and God gave them to him. He could not do what some pastors do, but as he had opportunity.

Dr. Plumb read the favorite hymn of Dr. Gould, beginning, "When I survey the wondrous cross," and said that the last verse was the index of his whole ministry, and con-

cluded with these words: "So we look upon his form at rest, and say, Farewell, farewell for a season."

Rev. Dr. Tuttle said in part:

To attempt to say what Dr. Gould has been to the churches and ministers of Worcester, would be to attempt to do more than any minister is able. There are many things which Dr. Gould did for Worcester. Some who knew him may think that his ill-health prevented him from being as useful as he wished. I am sure that Dr. Gould felt that himself. It seems to me that it is harder to bear God's will than to do it. But with all his hard experiences he has gone forth purified and in these days of changing thought he has given the example of being so entrenched in the truth that he thought of no change save to go deeper into the meaning of divine truths.

His heart was, perhaps, most with this church, but he loved all churches. He was one of the strongest-spirited men in the ministry of God that I have known.

Rev. Amos H. Coolidge, of Worcester (Class of 1856), sends this tribute to his long-time friend:—

"The activities of Dr. Gould have been from the first much circumscribed by physical limitations and depressions. He at different times received urgent and flattering invitations to the pastorate of important churches in Philadelphia, Boston and other cities, which he declined on account of his health. His only settlement as installed pastor was in Hartford. He was acting pastor of Piedmont Church in the first five years of its existence, and left upon it the permanent influence of his evangelical, devout and earnest spirituality. Although his ministerial aspirations were disappointed, he held, notwithstanding his limitations, a place of honor and influence alike among ministers and churches. In his later years of comparative retirement he was especially helpful to the small and more dependent churches, to which he contributed liberally, both pecuniarily and by personal service. In conversation and occasional addresses he was witty, sprightly and impressive. Warm-hearted, sympathetic and faithful, he was a man greatly beloved. His funeral in Piedmont Church was largely attended by sincere mourners. Dr. Gould regarded the Christian ministry as a preeminently grand and

responsible profession. His standard of preaching was high. In his estimation the pulpit was the throne of ministerial power. He was fearless and outspoken, and expressed his convictions and judgments in terms and tones clear, incisive, forceful, ringing. In his thinking and preaching Mr. Gould was intelligently and earnestly evangelical. He cared little for the subtleties or speculations of theological polemics, but to the end he firmly clung to the great central, vital, saving truths of the gospel. The last time I sat by his bed, not long before his death, he said, 'I have been reconstructing my theology. I don't know whether it is old or new. It is mostly condensed into two hymns:

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride;

and that other beautiful hymn:

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.'"

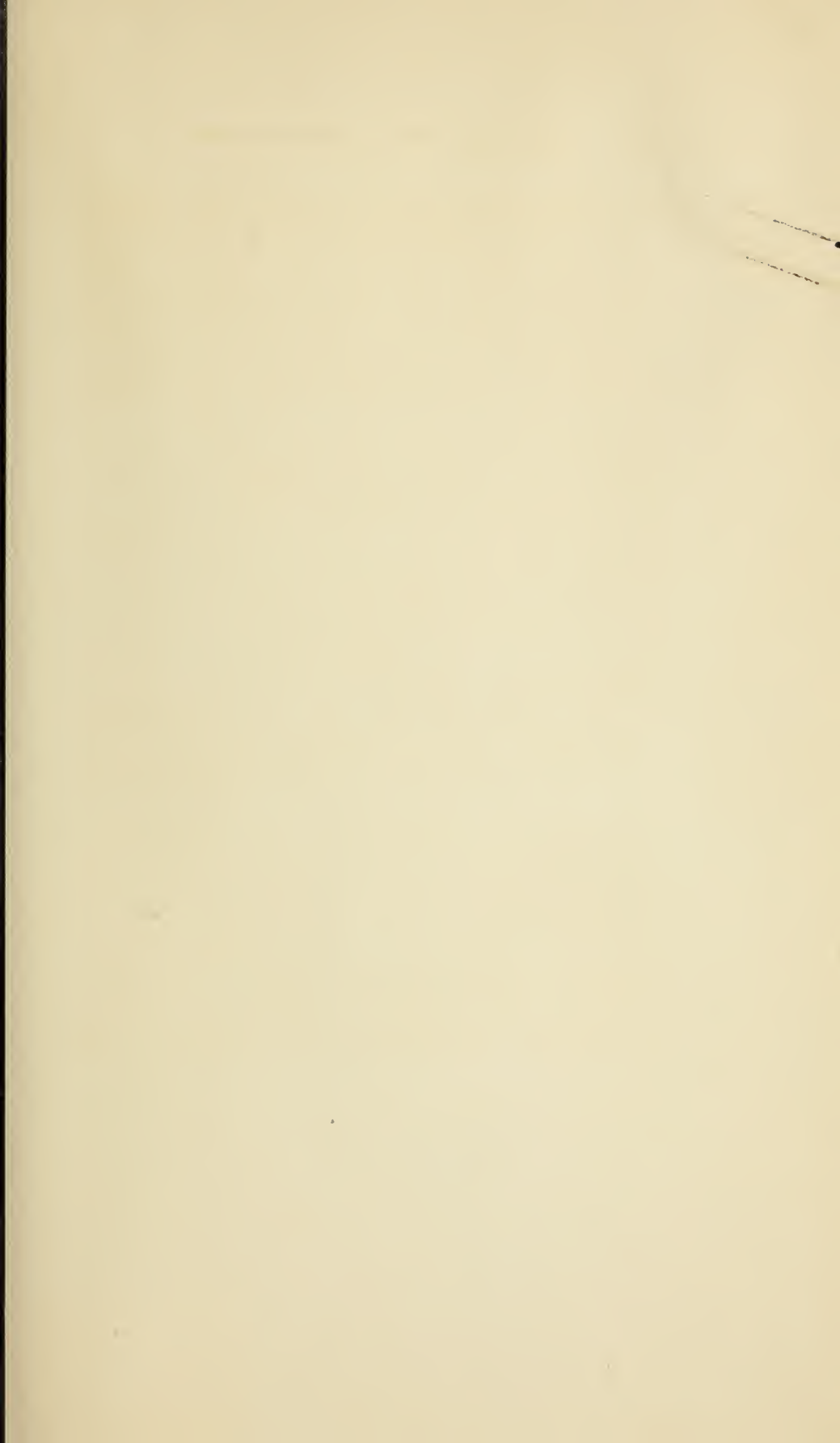
Resolutions in memory of the Rev. George H. Gould, D. D., of the class of 1850, were adopted May 26, 1899, by the Amherst Alumni Association, of which he was a member, as follows:—

Whereas our heavenly Father, in his divine wisdom, has removed from us, by the death of Rev. George H. Gould of the Class of 1850, one of the most honored, beloved and loyal of the sons of Amherst, we, in behalf of the Amherst Alumni Association of Central Massachusetts, desiring to express our appreciation of his character and work, and our sense of loss in his death, do hereby adopt the following resolution,—

First: That in the death of Dr. Gould, Amherst College has lost an alumnus who in breadth of scholarship, nobility of character and loyal interest in the college has stood among the first of her graduates. His diploma was won at Amherst only after a long and

bitter struggle with poverty. In the face of difficulties which would have deterred an ordinary man, he fought his way step by step until, after four years of struggle, he was graduated with honor in the class of 1850. He has represented the great work which Amherst has done for the education of poor boys, out of whom she has made some of the most cultured and useful men of our generation. He has stood for Amherst ideas and Amherst character. His entire career has been that of one who, in the halls of his Alma Mater, has learned how to make the most of himself for man and God. The broad, inspiring panorama of beauty spreading away from the old college in her "many windowed hills" has awakened many Amherst men to great visions of letters, life and duty; but never any among them more than Dr. Gould. He was a man of great visions, of splendid faith, of unswerving loyalty, of profound conviction, of wide culture. He represented the best of Amherst's best. Standing for the old, he was always interested and sympathetic with the newer Amherst. The reputation of the college was very dear to him. Her high ideals, which had so aroused and inspired him, he was eager to see preserved and followed in the development of her later life. He was one of the men who has brought imperishable honor to Amherst. His death is both a serious loss to her and to our Association from which the older men are fast falling by the way. To his high character and to our regard and love for him as a son of Amherst, we desire to bear this imperfect but grateful testimony.

Second: Be it resolved: that a copy of this resolution be inscribed upon the records of our Association, and also sent to Mrs. Gould, and to Dr. Hitchcock for preservation among the memorabilia of the Alumni, and published in the Amherst Student and the local press.



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